The Prospects and Possibilities of Broadening the use of the Irish language in an English-medium post-primary school: A Case Study.

Mark Flynn

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Abstract

The Irish language, classed as an endangered language, has been supported by successive Irish Government since the inception of the State in 1922. Yet, today, the high levels of support are not translated into daily usage and census data reveals a very low percentage admitting they use the language in their daily lives. This data is echoed in this study of Irish language knowledge and usage in a coeducational, English-medium, post-primary school in the West of Ireland. This single exploratory case study sought information from stakeholders about their attitudes and beliefs about the Irish language. Information was sought also about their perceptions of initiatives they envisaged would assist in broadening the use of Irish in school, as was their level of awareness of Governmental initiatives that support Irish in schools and in society.

While positive sentiments were expressed about the language there was less evidence of this sentiment being translated into action unless there was sufficient support and scaffolding available. The Irish langauge was valued as a weak marker of Irish identity rather than as a communicative tool due to English being spoken by the community. This removed the necessity to speak Irish. In this community Irish is rarely used in the home and it is used more often when on holidays or working abroad. Due to the lack of urgency to learn the language stakeholders in this community interviewees called for Irish learning to be entertaining and fun.

The apparent lack of ability to engage in more meaningful conversation was blamed on the Irish language syllabus, where there was a focus on literature and rote learning rather than on communicative skills. The Irish language was supported insofar as it was an opportunity to use Irish outside the classroom, but the support waned if extra work was involved. Participants in this study were unable to envisage how the proposed intervention would work. Evidently a lot of planning, headed by a committed team, is what was indicated to instil the promotion of the language.

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Dóibh siúl a raibh aon bhaint acu le mé a sheoladh ar bhóthar na leasa go dtí an pointe seo. Ó mo thuismitheoirí (atá ar shlí na Firinne) go dtí na hoidí spreagúla sa bhunscoil, iarbhunscoil agus tríú leibhéal agus dár ndóigh mo chairde atá bodhraithe ag éisteacht liom – is sibh a spreag mé agus a thug chuig ceann scríbe mé

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List of Acronym

CEFR: Common European Framework of Reference for languages
ESRC: Economic and Social Research Council
IPA: Interpretative phenomenological analysis
NPRM: Near Peer Role Models
RLS: Reversing Language Shift
TG4: Teilifís na Gaeilge - Irish Television Channel
TY: Transition Year

Glossary of Terms

125 Athbheochan	125 [years of] Revival (of the Irish language)
An Caighdeán Oifigiúil	The Official Standard (of the Irish language)
An Coimisinéir Teanga	The Language Commissioner for the Irish language
An Dáil	The Upper House of Parliament
An Fáinne	A ring worn in a lapel signifying that you are an Irish speaker.
Bliain na Gaeilge	Irish Year
Bunreacht na hÉireann	The Irish Constitution
Ceard Teastas	An Irish examination for teaching in Ireland (a requirement prior to 2000)
Ciorcal Comhrá	Language circles
Gaeilge Bheo	Irish alive
Gaelscoileanna	Schools that teach through the medium of Irish
Garda (Síochána)	Irish police force
Junior Certificate	The state examination after three years at post-primary school
Leaving Certificate	The state examination at the end of post-primary school
Oireachtas	The Irish Legislature
Raidió na Gaeltachta	A national Radio station broadcasting in Irish only
Transition Year	An optional year for student after three years of post-primary education focused on self-development

CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction

This exploratory case study focuses on the prospects and possibilities of broadening the use of the Irish language, outside of formal instruction, in a school environment. The proposal echoes the use of 'Gaeilge neamhfhoirmiúil' (informal use of Irish, outside of the Irish language class) which is endorsed at primary school level but not a common, if at all, in English-medium post-primary schools. The aim was to ascertain the level to which such an intervention could take place by assessing the levels of Irish language skills stakeholders posed and perhaps, more importantly, their attitude towards the Irish langauge. It also sought to ascertain the obstacles and objections involved in such a proposed intervention. Data collection took place during the 2017-2018 school year and was timely insofar as the Irish government designated 2018 as 'Bliain na Gaeilge' (The Irish language year) advocating continued support for the Irish language. Among the themes selected for celebration were; the creativity of the language, Irish language vibrancy and Community Participation (Government of Ireland, 2018a). Leo Varadkar (2018), the Taoiseach of Ireland (Head of Government), requested as many people as possible to get involved in the promotion of the language as it was an opportunity to improve fluency and to learn more about the language and to embrace the language in everyday life (Government of Ireland, 2008b).

Figure 1.1: Advertisement for Bliain na Gaeilge (Irish Year)

Source: Gaeilge 2018, 2018)

Aligning with this sentiment, this thesis deals with the notion that the education system, or more precisely the school environment, can be used more effectively in promoting the Irish language.

This first chapter serves as an introduction to the thesis which will initially detail the background to the study, focusing on the Irish language. The rational and objective of the study will be outlined before setting out the research questions for the study. Having set the focus of the investigation the chapter will detail the context, both local and national, in which the study took place. Building on the importance of context, the theoretical framework that underpins and informed the research (Spolsky's language policy model), will be explained as to its relevance to the study. This chapter also introduces practical aspects of the project such as the philosophical assumptions underlining the work and as an in-situ researcher the researcher's positionality precedes the conclusion.

1.2 Background.

1.2.1 The language

The Irish language is a Celtic language belonging to the Gaelic or Goidelic branch of the Celtic languages, along with Scottish Gaelic and Manx. It was established as the dominant language in Ireland by the 5th Century AD (An Coimisinéir Teanga, 2018).

Today, it is enshrined in the Constitution of Ireland in Article 8 which reads:

> "1. The Irish language as the national language is the first official language.
> 2. The English language is recognised as a second official language.
> 3. Provision may, however, be made by law for the exclusive use of either of the said languages for any one or more official purposes, either throughout the State or in any part thereof" (Bunreacht na hÉireann, 1937, p. 8).

Ireland's language landscape today is the result of three major historical influences. The language landscape in Ireland today is the result of three major historical influences. Firstly by the influence of British rule (up to 1922) where English was promoted, secondly by Governmental decisions when Ireland gained independence in 1922 and thirdly by the influx of immigrants

that came to Ireland due to EU enlargement in 2004, attracted by the economic prosperity in the country at the time (Immigrant Council of Ireland, 2017). For example, the 2016 census showed that more Polish (122,515 people) (CSO, 2017a) was spoken than Irish (73,803 people) (CSO, 2017b) as a first language. Prior to this, (McCloskey, 2001, p. 46) documented that the Irish language is unusual in the global context 'because its native speech community now contains more second language learners than native speakers". Only 1.7% of the Irish population (3 years or over) spoke Irish daily outside of the education system, with 17.4% of the population (3 years and over) speaking Irish at some stage outside the education system (CSO, 2017b). Yet 39.8% replied that they could speak Irish in 2016 (CSO, 2017b).

A language, which is not used in most domains or that is numerically weak is described commonly as a minority language (Walsh, 2005). Irish is described by some as being "a minority language only in terms of number of speakers" (Laoire, 2012, p. 18). However, due to the Irish language being "officially recognised as a 'national' language and 'first official language' in the Republic of Ireland" (ELUL, 2000; Ó Murchú, 2001) it is not classified as a minority language. Also, the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages was rejected by Ireland because according to Eamon Ó Cuív (former Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands), in a written response to a *Dáil Éireann* (Irish parliament) question stated;

> "…. *d(h)éanfadh sé dochar do stádas na Gaeilge i gcomhthéacs Bhunreacht na hÉireann agus i gcomhthéacs a bhfuil ar bun faoi láthair chun ardú céime a thabhairt don Ghaeilge san Aontas Eorpach*"
>
> ["… it could damage the status of Irish in the context of the Irish constitution and in the context of current efforts to raise the status of the language within the European Union" (Ó Cuív, 1998)].

Nevertheless, Irish is considered "definitely endangered" (Moseley, 2010) in global terms and is minoritized in relation to English in everyday life in

domains such as business, entertainment and the mainstream media. As Lo Bianco (2012, p. 518, cited in Kelly-Holmes and Atkinson (2017, p. 239)) states, “Ireland represents a case of failure and success, conquering all areas of formal legal recognition but marked by relative neglect of domain normalization”. While it occupies a marginal position in the public sphere, it has been an integral part of the policies of successive governments since the foundation of the state in 1923 (Walsh, 2005, p. 23).

1.2.2 Irish language and the education system

As with many endangered languages, education has played a central role in language revival in the past (Nahir, 1998). Therefore, as the first official language of the state it is a compulsory subject, on the Irish education syllabus, for the duration of a student’s primary and post-primary education ranging from approximately four to eighteen years of age. Pupils may, in specific circumstances, be granted an exemption from Irish if this is requested by parents, depending on the age of pupils when they first arrive in Ireland, or on specific learning difficulties that they may have.

The debate on the schools’ role in language revitalisation has centred typically on schools as agents of language revival, examining the concept of language planning and language education policy (Spolsky & Shohamy, 2000). Murtagh (2003) claims that the Irish language has survived mainly as a result of its inclusion in school. However, over-reliance on formal childhood education has been posited as a mistake in language revitalisation situations (Fishman, 2001; Harris, 1994; Hornberger & King, 1996). This “…over-reliance on formal childhood education” (Armstrong, 2014, p. 312) has occurred in Ireland (Coady & Ó Laoire, 2002). Indeed, the education system has been targeted as an agency and model of planning and revitalisation since the foundation of the State and has been viewed as one of “the critical engines for generating linguistic ability” in Irish (Government of Ireland, 2010, p. 12). However, restoration of Irish as “a spoken language of the people has proved disappointing” (Coolahan, 1981, p. 223), attributing this

blame to the over emphasis on the written language, rather than developing the spoken language.

While recognising its failure to reproduce sequential generations of bilinguals who use Irish regularly, the education system is still being used in its objective of societal bilingualism (Murtage & Van der Silk, 2004). Harris (2008) stated that the teaching of Irish in the education system (as a second language) has compensated for the failure to naturally transmit Irish outside the *Gaeltacht* areas. Only the Irish-medium schools, accounting for 9% of post-primary schools in Ireland, can be categorised as a strong model for bilingual education (Baker & Jones, 1998, p. 486) while weakness have been identified in the "transmitting of Irish in parts of the English-medium schools' systems" which comprise of 91% of post-primary schools (Ó Murchú, 2016, p. 16). Even in areas where the Irish language is the main language in the home and in the community the key institution of intergenerational transmission is now the school (Kelly-Holmes & Atkinson, 2017, p. 239).

As far back as 1973, Ó Cathain stated the restoration of Irish would be retarded and hampered until such time as a practical day-to-day use of the language outside the schools was encouraged and fostered. Even then, it was evident that schools alone were incapable of restoring Irish as the language of the people (Ó Laoire, 2005). This investigation, therefore, takes the first step in such an endeavour as it looks at the prospects and possibilities of taking Irish from the confines of the classroom into the immediate school surroundings were the language learned in the classroom could be used in a meaningful communicative manner (Swain, 1996). When stakeholders' knowledge of and attitudes about the Irish langauge are ascertained and when their visions for possible activities ….The language policy that would bring about such a change in practice is the core of this thesis.

1.2.3 The Irish language curriculum

For English-medium post-primary schools the Irish language is taught as a second language (L2) however, there is no readily identifiable speech community outside the classroom where Irish language interactions might be meaningful. The “disjunction between the energies invested in learning” Irish in the classroom and the lack of opportunities to use it outside of the classroom is has been growing steadily (Ó Laoire, 2015, p. 103). In classrooms, the communicative-type syllabi implies that students who rarely get a chance to engage with the speech community are being “asked so suspend belief and rehearse communication situations” which can only be used naturally within the “native speaker community networks” (Ó Laoire & Harris, 2006, p. 14). The new Irish language specifications for students began delivery in September 2017 does little to address this. It states that “students will participate in a wide range of language activities to develop their spoken and written communication in a wide variety of contexts according to their own ability (Government of Ireland, 2017, p.8). The document acknowledges that “… all language skills need not be acquired at the same level, for example spoken competency could be more advanced than written for example” (Government of Ireland, 2017, p.2) and students are required to “… create and present oral texts by themselves and/or as part of a group demonstrating an understanding of audience” (Government of Ireland, 2017, p.2). However this new specification has been “criticised by teachers who say that an added focus on literature at the expense of the spoken language is misguided” (Ó Caollaí, 2019). Yet the ‘20-year strategy for the Irish langauge’ realise the importance of giving ‘… life to the Irish language outside the classroom for the young people who study it in the formal education system.’(Government of Ireland, 2010, p12). This thesis focuses on the prospects and possibilities of broadening the use of the Irish langauge outside of the classroom. It inquires to what extent the language can be used outside of the classroom in the school environment giving students and opportunity to practice the langauge they have learned, if they so wished.

Unfortunately, “problems of poor motivation and underachievement” have been associated with the Irish language in education (Ó Laoire, 2005, p. 103). As a result, to learn Irish as a second language (L2) “in English-medium primary and post primary schools has proved extremely difficult and has resulted in a negative attitude toward the language” (Ó Laoire, 2005, p. 103). Ó Laoire (2005, p. 103) adds that this negativity often begins in primary school, where students receive, on average one hour of formal instruction in the language each day for eight school years. Ó Riagáin, 1997 (cited in Ó Laoire, 2005, p.103) supports this fact and recognises that ‘‘... even after 13 years’ study of the subject the speaking ability of the majority of the cohort is only moderate or, in the case of a growing minority, negligible”. Ó Laoire (1996, cited in Ó Laoire, 2005, p. 103) indicates that those who are learning the Irish language as a L2 do not view it in “the same or similar way” they do the new foreign language or the third language (L3) that they are learning”.

There have been calls to bring forward new language policy, policy that would bring English, Irish and modern languages together. Such policy needs “to facilitate, fuel, and drive language acquisition in the classroom at and to appropriate levels and it needs to enable to empower learners, when outside the classroom situation, to seek out opportunities for acquisition” (Ó Laoire, 2005, p. 103). Ó Laoire (2005, p. 106) also asserts that “the school on its own can only be responsible for bestowing language competence in a very broad sense”. The most effective and efficient learning “tends to be located permanently outside the school, in settings closer to the natural language domain or workplace”, (Mac Aogáin, 1990, p. 41, cited in Ó Laoire 2005, p. 106). In the absences of such a natural language domain, this project investigates the extent to which stakeholders in this organisation can imitated an Irish langauge domain by investigating their knowledge of, their attitude and beliefs towards and thoughts about the Irish langauge in their lives..

The education system is no longer playing the revitalisation and language maintenance role it traditionally did (Harris *et al.,* 2006). Acknowledging, that Harris *et al.’*s study was in relation to findings in mainstream primary

schools, yet, it shows a trend that there has been a substantial, long-term, decline in speaking proficiency (and to a lesser extent in *Gaeltacht* schools). In accounting for this decline in performance in mainstream primary schools, three kinds of causative factors were highlighted. At first, schools had a drop in the core time for Irish language and in the amount of informal Irish-medium teaching outside of the Irish lesson. Secondly, low teacher morale evolved due to the isolation of schools, wishing to promote Irish and who were carrying most of the responsibility for maintaining the language day-to-day. The third reason posited was the DES delegating their responsibilities of the day-to-day responsibility of Irish in education in relation to initiating remedial action to advisory and statutory bodies where there was a lack of clarity and resolve. Harris, 2006, pp. 362-363 explains;

> "All this serves to illustrate the complex manner in which language revitalisation and maintenance programmes can be undermined by socio educational and institutional changes, which initially appear quite remote from teaching and learning processes".

However, contrary to these findings, census data from 2006 shows the main increases in knowledge and use of the Irish language was in the age brackets 15 -19 (27% use Irish daily which has been attributed to the education system) (CSO, 2006). However, a closer observation of these figures also points to high levels of language attrition in the initial years following compulsory education (Murtagh, 2003) with only 5.58% in the 20-24 bracket reporting daily use of Irish.

1.3 Rationale for the study

1.3.1 Personal and professional rationale

The rational for this study stems from both a personal and a professional perspective. From a personal perspective, it is disheartening that despite all the state intervention, since its foundation in 1922, to promote the Irish language, that such negative attitudes exists towards it. Darmody & Daly (2015, p. ix) found that "students' negative attitude toward Irish seemed to

remain constant throughout their post-primary schooling". Learning Irish as "a second language in English-medium primary and post-primary schools has proved extremely difficult and has resulted in negative attitudes toward the language" (Ó Laoire, 2005, p. 105). Recognising that these biases exist is crucial for determining the utility of study results (Galdas, 2017, p. 1). The term 'bias', drawn from the quantitative research paradigm, can describe any influence that provides a distortion in the results of a study (Beck & Polit, 2014). From a professional prospective it is disheartening that only;

> "A minority of non-native speaker students leave school with the capacity to participate in social or cultural events conducted through the medium of Irish .... For the majority, learning Irish is perceived as a necessary evil …. essentially a waste of time" (Little, 2003, p. 16).

Successive governments have supported the language with few comments questioning its viability. Yet, there is little heed paid to the requirements of the Education Act (1998) (9(f) and 9(h)) which states that;

> "all associated with the implementation of The Education Act shall contribute to the realisation of national policy and objectives in relation to the extension of bilingualism in Irish society and in particular the achievement of a greater use of the Irish language at school and in the community". (Government of Ireland, 1998, p. 10).

The last governmental Minster who acknowledge the challenges the Irish language faced was the former Minister of Education Mary Hanifin, who in 2006, commented that;

> "For we all know that students' enthusiasm for learning Irish is affected society's attitude to the language, and that for a long time learning Irish has been seen by far too many of our young people as pointless…In relation to Irish at school level, I would like to say straight off that I absolutely accept that it is not good enough that after having learnt the language for 13 or 14 years, young people are leaving school unable to speak it" (DES, 2006).

This was also the view of McDonnell who wrote:

> "The main policy focus (perhaps to an unbalanced extent) has been the education system. In many ways, achievements here are disappointing compared to inputs. Despite the time spent between ages four and 18, it is shocking how few young people finish school able to speak Irish fluently. Such poor outcomes would be unacceptable in most subjects" (McDonnell, 2012).

The present Minister for State reverts to a more traditional tone when discussing the 'Five-year action plan for the Irish language (2018 – 2023)'. This five-year plan sets out 187 measures, in nine "action areas", including Education, the Gaeltacht, Family Transmission of the Language, Services and Community and Media and Technology and it is recognised as an effort "to breathe new life into the Government's '*20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030'* (Ó Muirí, 2018). The Minister states that he "recognises the vital role of the education system in promoting and advancing the Irish language" (McHugh, 2018). The new Junior Certificate reform (i.e. education provision in the first three years of post-primary education) recognises;

> "… the need to build on our understanding of education, and to promote active and collaborative learning that will allow for a better balance between the development of subject knowledge, and the development of important life skills and thinking abilities" (DES, 2015, p. i)

All subjects have been reformed to align with the new focus. The reformed Irish language specifications offered two separate curricula for the first time - one for English medium schools (T2) and one for Gaeltacht schools and Gaelcholáistí (T1) - the new specifications commenced in September 2017 for first year post-primary students. The new specification recognised that the students in T2 schools did not have a speech community "ar thairseach

an rang Gaeilge" [on the threshold of the Irish classroom] and highlighted the importance of creating a "nasc fiúntach … leis an bpobal teanga chun tacú leis scoláirí" [worthwhile connection … with a speech community to support the students]. It sought;

> "• deiseanna úsáide eile a aimsiú [to source opportunities to use Irish]
> • teacht ar eiseamláirí cruinne, dílse teanga [to source authentic language sources]
> • páirt a ghlacadh i bpobal na Gaeilge [to take part with Irish community activities]" (NCCA, 2017, p. 3)

This, they point out aligns with the targets of the '20-year strategy for the Irish language' (2010) especially with the necessity to *'beocht a chur sa Ghaeilge lasmuigh den seomra ranga i gcás daoine óga atá ag foghlaim sa chóras oideachais foirmiúil*.'[Revitalise the Irish language outside of the classroom in the instance of young people who are learning [Irish] in the formal education system] (Government of Ireland, 2010 p. 12).

Added to this the NCCA outline that;

> " Tagann forbairt ar dheacrachtaí scoláirí i leith úsáid na Gaeilge mar theanga bheo tríd an tuiscint agus an teagmháil a bhíonn acu leis an bpobal teanga agus an machnamh a dhéanann said orthu féin mar fhoghlaimeoirí teanga. Cabhraíonn sé seo deacrachtaí níos dearfaí a chothú i leith fhoghlaim agus úsáid na Gaeilge. (NCCA, 2017, p. 3)
>
> [Students' difficulty with using the Irish language as a living language are alleviated when they understand that there is an opportunity to use the langauge with a speech community and this gives rise to an opportunity for them to reflect on their efforts as language learners. This assists to enhance a more positive experience regarding learning and using Irish].

This thesis ascertains what level of Irish language competency exists among stakeholders in the school and what attitudes and beliefs there are towards the language. This information will inform any future planned intervention for

a broader use of the Irish language in this school community. It will highlight how feasible the visions of the NCCA are regarding the use of the Irish language outside of the classroom in this English-medium post-primary school environment.

1.3.2 Absence of use

A rationale for the study is a belief, as professed in the Irish proverb “Beatha teanga í a labhairt” (the life of a language is to speak it). In the absence of a native speech community it is an aim of the study to ascertain the feasibility of broadening the use of the Irish language in the school, outside of the Irish language classroom, and creating facilities of using the learned language.

The researcher’s vision is that there would be a more visible and aural presence of the Irish language than there is at present, creating an opportunity for stakeholders to use whatever Irish they have learned in the Irish language classroom. The initiative entails the possibility of having an Irish language policy where all stakeholders would be supported to use whatever level of Irish they have. For such an initiative to be successful it requires the participation of stakeholders in the school community who are capable and willing to communicate in Irish. At present, there is no functional context in which students can use the language they have learned. The thesis studies the attitudes of stakeholders towards the Irish langauge with an aim of setting the basis for a broader use of the Irish language with a planned intervention in the future. This thesis is the first step in such an intervention.

Ellis (2008, p. 885) pontificates that “learners progress most rapidly when they experience both form focused instruction and communicative exposure”. This is a problem with ‘lesser used languages’ because;

> “the general absence of a functional context not only in terms of limiting exposure to naturalistic use of Irish but also because of the potentially negative effect on instrumental and integrative motivation” (Murtagh, 2007, p. 429).

Similarly, in the field of learning Japanese as a Second Language, Miyazaki (2006, cited in Inaba, 2013), claims that language acquisition could be promoted by formulating a connection between three forms of management: teacher-management where activities are classroom related, learner-management where learners take autonomy of learning outside of the classroom and non-management where the second language was acquired in naturalistic settings. However, as Higgins (2009) relays, little research has investigated the links between instructed language learning, which is closely related to language classes, and second language use outside the classroom.

Importance of use in predicting levels of competence in Irish has been highlighted in the only large-scale study of public attitudes, ability and use in relation to Irish (Government of Ireland, 1975). The strongest correlate of ability (self-assessed) among the adult population was the amount of Irish used by the respondent during his / her primary and post-primary schooling combined. The second strongest correlate was in relation to the home-school nexus and the extent to which Irish was used by the respondent outside the classroom during these years. Harris and Murtagh's (1988) study of primary students has confirmed the positive effect even moderate home use of Irish can have on proficiency in Irish. Jones and Morris (2009), whose study was in the context of Welsh parents, found that where parents were more positive towards the Welsh language so too were the children.

1.3.3 Economic Rationale

An economic rationale is also considered. "The preservation of endangered languages is very costly and if one decides to spend what is necessary, the result is not cost-effective" (Derhemi, 2002, p. 154). This is supported by Ó Curreáin (2004) who acknowledges that despite the vast amount of time and capital spent on Irish language teaching/learning, it has not been successful in promoting the bilingual aim of the Irish Constitution. Funding for the teaching of the Irish language in schools in 2011 was announced to be €573.7m by the former Minister of Education and Skills Deputy Ruairí Quinn

(2008). Budget expenditure for the Irish language had fallen to €339 million in 2019 budget highlighting that “the Government’s ongoing commitment to conserve, protect, develop and present Ireland's unique culture and heritage; to promote the Irish language” (Government of Ireland, 2019, p. 69). In Europe, given the critical situation of public finances, the question of using public money efficiently has become a major issue and renewed focus on this matter is now required (Agasisti *et al.,* 2011). There is also increased attention on the role of performances indicators as a measure of the ability of single institutions to pursue strategic objectives (Simpson, 2009; Karsten *et al.,* 2010).

1.3.4 Gap in the research

While much literature exists on ascertaining teachers’ views on language promotion within the classroom (Cummins, 2005; Chambers, 1991) there is very little research examining beliefs about the use of language outside the classroom and in the immediate school surrounding.

My study, therefore, aims to ascertain the attitudes of stakeholders in a post-primary school towards a broader use of the Irish language in school life. Such an approach would require a significant change in school policy and in stakeholders’ attitudes. Therefore, it is important to learn how stakeholders’ experienced and still experience the Irish language and how they envisage a broader use of the language in the school. In Irish-medium schools students converse with school staff and each other in Irish and the researcher’s vision is to ascertain what are the thoughts and beliefs of stakeholders in an English-medium school that would cause them to make more use of the Irish langauge in their day-to-day communications. The aim of this study is therefore to determine if such a project, on language promotion, is feasible in a coeducational community school in the west of Ireland.

As English is the dominant language in the school population, revitalising or reviving a threatened language against a dominant language ideology, one must promote a counter ideology that normalises or renormalizes the use of the threatened language in some sites, domains or situations (Armstrong,

2011). Seeking a possible counter ideology, and the incremental stages involved in such an intervention, is the focus of this study.

From established educational and applied linguistic perspectives, the natural, preeminent 'home' of second language learning (L2) is the L2 classroom – that social setting where students and teachers, often on a daily basis and in huge numbers, purposively engage in developing L2 knowledge and proficiency (Firth, 2009, p. 129). This is true for all the major languages but in the case of minority languages there remains less opportunity to use the learned classroom language outside of the classroom.

The real potential for a social approach to language learning lies;

> "… outside the classroom in the activities of ordinary bilingual social life …The noneducational reality is just outside the classroom, and the target of the participants is to participate in these activities. Why, then, are the doors of classrooms still locked and the social theories of language learning confined to educational environments only?" (Wagner, 2004, p. 615).

Notions of language use and language learning are not only conceptually inseparable, they are also context sensitive and context dependent (see, e.g., Canagarajah 2007; Candlin and Sarangi 2002; Firth and Wagner 2007; Kramsch and Whiteside 2007; Lave and Wenger 1991; Leung 2005; Rogoff 2003, cited in Firth, 2009). Learning of any kind is rooted in, and shaped by, particularized social practices. This is the core insight of Lave and Wenger's (1991) highly influential notion of situated learning and underpins Vygotsky's theories of learning (see e.g., Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Any experimental settings, as the organisation studied in this research, where second language learners undertake tasks and interact with other stakeholders, are complex and diverse 'communities of practice' with their own pre-ordained 'rules' of engagement, impacting social relations, 'identity work' (Duff & Uchida, 1997, Richards 2006; cited in Firth, 2009). It is also the premise upon which the 'ecological' approach to learning is based. As van Lier (2000, pp. 246-247) states;

> “From an ecological perspective, the learner is immersed in an environment full of potential meanings. These meanings become available gradually as the learner acts and interacts within and with this environment. Learning is not a holus-bolus or piecemeal migration of meanings to the inside of the learner’s head, but rather the development of increasingly effective ways of dealing with the world and its meanings. Therefore, to look for learning is to look at the active learner in her environment, not at the contents of her brain”.

Ascertaining what those meaning are for stakeholders in an English-medium post-primary school, in relation to the Irish language, will assist in planning to broaden the use of the Irish langauge

1.4 Research aims and research questions

Prospects and possibilities of broadening the use of the Irish language in an English-medium post-primary school was the focus of this study. It aimed to ascertain the possibility of creating a functional context for the Irish language within a school community with support of stakeholders. In order to examine the possibility of a functional context it was imperative to enquire about stakeholders’ knowledge of the language, to enquire about their experiences of acquisition and to learn where they use the Irish language today. Their attitudes and beliefs of the Irish language may give an insight to the level of commitment to promote Irish in the organisation. Seeking stakeholders’ knowledge of present Governmental initiatives regarding the Irish language gave credence to where they envisage the language in their lives. It was envisaged that those who would be aware of government initiatives would be more interested and more aware of the Irish language in their lives as opposed to those who had not heard about any initiative, implying that the Irish language is not important in their lives.

Furthermore, in order to examine a functional context for the language it was of importance to hear what stakeholders believed would promote the Irish language in the school community outside of the Irish language classroom. Such knowledge is essential in planning incremental steps when introducing

a broader use of the Irish language. For example how willing are stakeholders to communicate in Irish and under what conditions they would feel more comfortable using Irish? Information on stakeholders' knowledge, experiences and attitudes towards the Irish language will enable the researcher to assess how feasible a language intervention would be and how such an intervention could be planned. What steps do stakeholders envisage being of importance in such an endeavour?

The benefactors of such a proposal primarily are the student cohort but other stakeholders may also be contributors and benefactors as they get an opportunity to practice and use their own level of Irish.

The above review has led to the following research questions:

1. Language knowledge and use.
   What are stakeholders' knowledge on different aspects of the Irish language?
   a. How do stakeholders rate their level of Irish?
   b. How do they use the language in their lives (if at all)?
   c. How have their experiences of acquisition impacted on their views of the Irish language?
2. Language Attitudes and beliefs
   How their beliefs about the language have evolved and how it has shaped their identity and/or their language ideology?
3. Language planning
   a. What knowledge do interviewees' have of Government initiatives that promote the Irish language today?
   b. What are the factors that stakeholders envisage would encourage or inhibit establishing a broader use of the Irish language in the school outside of the Irish language the classroom from;
      (i) a macro level and (ii) a micro level perspective?

1.5 Theoretical framework

This research sought a possible language policy for a school community investigating what level of language skills existed, what language beliefs and attitudes were held and what perceived language interventions would it take to incorporate a broader use of the Irish language in school life. The term 'policy' is somewhat ambiguous (Spolsky, 2009; Spolsky & Shohamy, 1999) but Kaplan & Baldauf's (1997, pp. x-xi) definition of 'language policy' state that it is "a body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules and practices intended to achieve the planned language change in the society, group or system". However, Spolsky's framework was selected as a relevant framework as it introduces a broader concept incorporating ecology, ideology, and management while acknowledging complex relationships amongst these components. This provides a "more comprehensive understanding of what language policy really is" (Shohamy, 2008, p. 364).

Spolsky's theory is used to identify and analyse three aspects of language policy; language practices, language beliefs, and language management. The concept of ecology, or that of the language practices of the community, gives an insight into what stakeholder's level of Irish is, where they acquired the language and where they use the language. Such information was paramount in understanding their experiences and feelings about the language. Spolsky's assertion that, "practices are the 'real' policy although participants may be reluctant to admit it" (Spolsky, 2009, p. 4). Schiffman (2006, p. 112) advocates that;

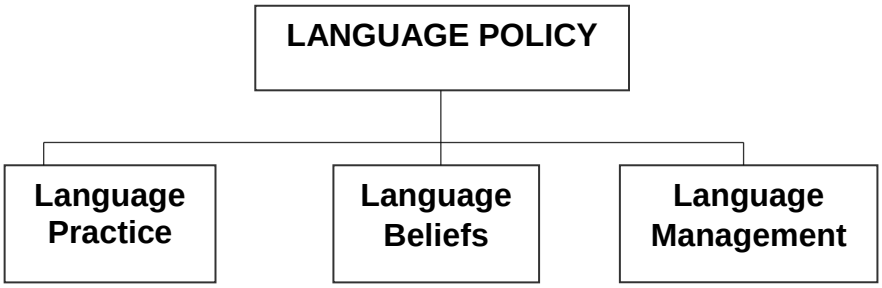
> "it is important to view language policy as not only the explicit, written, overt, de jure, official, and top-down decision-making about language, but also the implicit unwritten, covert, de facto, grass-roots, and unofficial ideas and assumptions, which can influence the outcomes of policy-making just as emphatically and definitively as the more explicit decisions".

Spolkey's second tenet in his model focuses on language ideology which incorporates the beliefs participants have about language and language use.

It gives information regarding a “community consensus on what value to apply to … [a] named language variety that make up its repertoire” (Spolsky, 2004, p. 14). This relationship of beliefs and ideologies is also in Silverstein’s (1979) concept of ideology, but also “beliefs about language and bilingualism” (Spolsky, 2008, p. 143). This is of importance here when investigation the lesser used Irish language.

The third tenet is that of language management which investigates stakeholders’ views on what efforts could modify or influence practice by any kind of language intervention, planning or management. (Spolsky, 2004, p.5). Persistent efforts throughout the study to design a conceptual framework for this study continuously came back to the three Spolsky tenets of practice (which was associated with knowledge and opportunity), attitudes and belief and management.

Figure 1. 1 Spolsky's Language Policy Model



As this is an exploratory case study on the prospects and possibilities of a broader use of the Irish language in a school, the third concept of management is only what stakeholders perceive at this stage. Not totally in line with Spolsky’s assertion on language management where he defines it as “the formulation and proclamation of an explicit plan or policy, usually but not necessarily written in a formal document, about language use” (2004, p. 11). Nevertheless, this model allows one to study the language situation, gathering information on what stakeholders believe would assist in promoting the Irish language and this would lead to creating an Irish language policy for this organisation.

Top-down and bottom up perspectives are implicit in Spolsky’s model, since emphasis is placed on both management and practices as components of

policy hence allowing the researcher to enquire of stakeholders' knowledge of top-down from outside agencies and government departments.
As this case study explores participants' knowledge, beliefs and perceptions regarding the Irish language a policy can only be suggested as no intervention has taken place to change the language practices within the community. Due to this I propose an adaptation of Spolsky's Language Policy Model (Figure 1.3) highlighting how the model fits with the research questions proposed.

1.6 Research Context

1.6.1 Internal context

The context of this qualitative case study will be stakeholders in one coeducational, rural, community school in the West of Ireland. Community schools are publicly funded post-primary schools which serve as both an educational institution and centre of community life. The Community School system, the result of a government initiative in 1970, brought together in a single institution the academic style education of the traditional post-primary school[1] and the practically orientated programme of the Vocational School[2] (ACCS, 2008). The Community School in this case study was founded in 1990 as a result of the amalgamation of three post-primary schools situated in a rural town - the Sisters of Mercy post-primary school for girls, the Christian Brothers' post-primary school for boys and the coeducational vocational school.

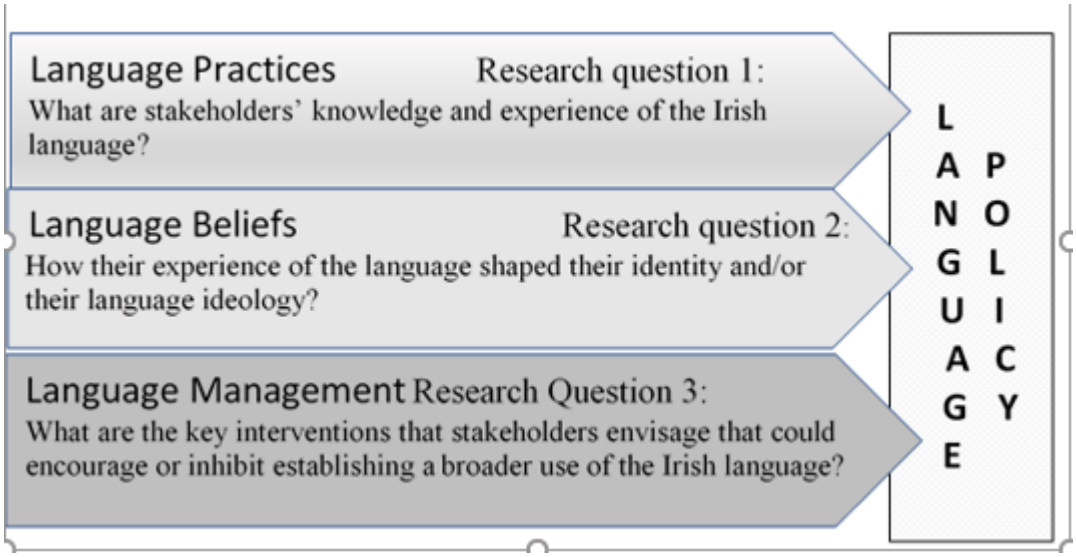
Under the Community School system pupils can sample both the practical and academic in a broad general curriculum, so that each can be offered an

[1] Secondary schools are privately owned and managed and often run by religious orders, although the teachers in these schools are generally lay staff. The majority of secondary schools are free, but there are fee-paying schools also.

[2] Vocational schools in Ireland places a large emphasis on vocational and technical education and are managed by Vocational Education Committees. Establishment of the schools is largely provided by the state; funding is through block grant system providing about 90% of necessary funding requirements.

educational structure appropriate to their needs, abilities and interests. The amalgamation of the Secondary and Vocational schools aims to ensure, as decreed by the originators of the policy that created community schools in Ireland, equality of educational opportunities for both boys and girls regardless of background or social status (ACCS, 2008). The policy makes no mention of the Irish language. The three schools replaced were all English medium schools, so it was assumed that this would continue in the case study school.

Figure 1. 2 Spolsky's Language Policy Model aligned with the research questions



The primacy of English in the school is reinforced by its location in a non-Irish speaking area (a *Galltacht*) where the school is the third largest employer in the community. Thus, it has a staff and student body whose first language tends to be English rather than Irish. Although there is an Irish speaking area (*Gaeltacht*) only 12 miles away and people from this area use the towns' facilities, the oral and visible uses of Irish in the town appears non-existent.

The school is 1.2 miles from the town centre and is situated on a residential road between a small housing estate and the town's only primary school (Figure 1.4). It was the property of the Sisters of Mercy and it is where the secondary school for girls was situated. The 1990 erection of 36 classrooms was an extension of the former girls' secondary school. Today the school

comprises of 42 classrooms, but no classroom is specifically designed as a language laboratory and while the school library shelves an Irish language section there is little demand for these texts.

The 2017-2018 school enrolment of 648 students (Boys: 306 and Girls 342) come from 337 homes. School records indicate that 8.2% of the student population are from immigrant families (Polish, Latvian, Lithuanian and Pakistani) who moved into the region/country in last six years. 5.1% of the student population are from the settled Irish travellers. At present 42 teaching staff are employed with 12 auxiliary staff which includes special needs assistants, secretaries, janitors and cleaning staff. Only one employee is a non-Irish national. Only one teacher is a native Irish speaker, the remainder having learned Irish, to various standards, in the education system. The school principal does not use Irish to converse but is supportive of the Irish department in the school.

The Irish department comprises of five teachers which includes one native speaker. Irish teachers communicate daily in Irish in the staff room, classroom and around the school, hence the language is heard being spoken often. No student or staff families use Irish as a first language in the home.

Irish is a compulsory subject for all students except for those have a recognised special educational need or those who have entered the Irish education system at or after the age of eleven years old. The Department of Education and Skills require that student receive 40 minutes of Irish language teaching five times a week in preparation for two state examinations – the Junior Certificate at the end of three years at post-primary level and the Leaving Certificate at the end of their post-primary education. Irish, English and Mathematics skills are examined at three different levels - Higher, Ordinary, and Foundation level, in both state examinations. All other subjects are examined at Higher and Ordinary level only. To be awarded third level placement students must earn points gained from results awarded in the Leaving Certificate examination (Table 1.1).

In this school English and Irish are compulsory languages on the curriculum while French and German are optional languages for study.

In the 2018 examination 1.02% failed Irish at Leaving Certificate in the school in comparison with the national failure rate of 8%. However, many students opt for ordinary level studies (74.5% in comparison with a national average of 57.8%) where there is a lower standard of Irish required than in the higher-level examination (State Examination Commission (SEC), 2017). Therefore, there are many challenges facing an attempt to broaden the use of Irish in the school and this research sets the scene for the feasibility of such an intervention.

1.6.2 External context

The challenges of broadening the use of the Irish language are compounded by the national situation for the use of the Irish language. The Irish state's object of societal bilingualism is intended to be achieved by funding the teaching of Irish in the school system where it is taught in three different school contexts (Table 1.2).

The overwhelming majority of children learn Irish in English medium schools (Table 3). These schools can have a very important role in the national language revitalisation effort (Harris, 1991; 1997; 2002; 2005; Ó Riagáin & Harris, 1993). Within this context Irish is taught as a school subject for one hour daily in primary schools for eight years (on average: 1,600 hours) and a further instruction of 35 minutes daily on average for five days a week (over an academic year of 30 weeks for five years). This gives a total of 2,3000 hours on average not including homework, private tuition and courses in the *Gaeltacht* (Ó Laoire, 2000). To achieve a high level of fluency in a language, the children need to be exposed to that language 30% of their waking up time. For a child that would be approximately 25 hours a week (Bourgogne, 2013, p.19).

Figure 1. 3 Aerial Photograph showing site of school

Source: Goggle Earth (2018).

Table 1. 1 Leaving Certificate Grades and their associated points

Leaving Cert Grade	Higher Paper	Lower Paper
H1/O1	100	56
H2/O2	88	46
H3/O3	77	37
H4/O4	66	28
H5/O5	56	20
H6/O6	46	12
H7/O7	37	0
H8/O8	0	0

Source: Central Applications Office (2017).

Goodwill needs to be harnessed to get maximum results from the teaching of 'living' Irish in English-medium primary and post-primary schools (Mac Gréil & Rhatigan, 2009). Thus, any initiative which may enhances Irish language acquisition could make a substantial contribution to language revival given the number of these English medium schools. By increasing the oral and visual language usage in the students' environment it elevates possible build-up of frustration which could occur as a result of being highly motivated to learn the language and then not being able to use it.

However, using schools as the main transmitters of language learning, has created resentment towards the language and is viewed as a naïve expectation of language learning, equating language learning to math or geography or history (Slomanson, 1996). At present, in the case school, Irish is confined to the classroom. Linguists recognise that language is not a "subject" that can be taught formally in an hour a day. Rather, language learning is a subconscious cognitive system that requires maturation and constant and consistent input (Carnie, 1995). For language revival to be successful focus should be placed on usage in the home and in the general community rather than total focus on educational system, hence this research suggests a shift of focus from the classroom to the whole school environment.

Table 1. 2 Language types of post-primary schools in Ireland, 2016-17

School	Home language	Principle medium of instruction	Number of Schools
English-medium	Primarily English	English	669
Gaeltacht	Primarily Irish	Irish	22
All Irish	Irish or English	Irish	44

Source: Department of Education and Skills (2016)

1.7 Philosophical Approach

1.7.1 General nature of educational research and paradigms

As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 the philosophical approach that underpins this research is interpretivism. This paradigm embraces the notion of subjectivity and the personal involvement of the researcher in the research (Bassey, 2003) while it aims to “understand the subjective world of human experience” (Cohen *et al.,* 2007, p. 21), suggesting that "reality is socially constructed" (Mertens, 2005, p. 12). The commitment is to understand and interpret processes which are occurring in their natural settings in a holistic manner, acknowledging that there are multiple realities. It does not believe that there is an objective truth which is "out there". While assuming that an objective world exists, it assumes the world might not be readily apprehended and that variable relations or facts might be only probabilistic, not deterministic (Gephart, 1999).

My epistemological assumption is that knowledge about the social world is based upon our ability to experience the world as others experience it. ‘Reality’, in this sense, is created by people experiencing and interpreting the world subjectively. The aim is not to establish causal relationships rather it is to understand how and why people interpret the world in various ways (Lee & Baskerville, 2003). Knowledge is thus seen to be comprised of multiple sets of interpretations that are part of the social and cultural context in which it occurs.

The ontological position therefore is that the social world is very different to the natural world. People, for example, act consciously in order to create their social existence therefore human consciousness is highly significant. It is not possible to make cause and effect statements about the social world that are ‘true for all time’ and as a result limited and very specific causal statements can be made.

The study examines stakeholders’ language ideologies within the context of the integration of the Irish language into school life, where Irish is not the first

language of the student cohort. For the purpose of this research, ideologies will indicate beliefs held as truths – most often unconsciously – and rooted in one's social position. Nespor (1987), believes teachers being interviewed for example are likely to draw on belief systems rather than other perhaps more rationally based forms of knowledge. Pajares (1992) further elaborated on the distinction between beliefs and knowledge, reinforcing the idea that beliefs were based on personal evaluation and judgment. This is best served by a qualitative approach.

1.7.2 How the paradigm identified inform my research design?

My epistemological position has developed over several years prior to this study. My initial research training was firmly based in a strongly positivist approach to social science. However, my later studies highlighted the value of in-depth participant information as offered in the post-modern paradigm. The interpretive paradigm is based on the idea that social research should seek to elicit the 'meaning' of events and phenomena from the point of view of participants" therefore for the purpose of my research questions I will be incorporating the interpretive paradigm. The choice of methodologies is dictated to some extent by my research questions and by this paradigm. There is a choice of research methodologies associated with the qualitative research paradigm, but a case study best serves my research aims. A case study is a "method of choice when the phenomenon understudy is not readily distinguishable from its context" (Yin, 1993, p. 3). This research methodology is chosen as my research question is exploratory as I aim to discover what beliefs and attitudes exist in relation to the promotion of the Irish language. The methodology of evidence collection will be; notes on my observation of the school, in-depth interviews with a variety of stakeholders, notes on photographic evidence and a study of the literature (school documentation) available. This qualitative methodology approach provides in-depth knowledge for the researcher – highlighting/discovering hidden motivations and values.

The observation method involves the researcher watching, recording, and analysing events of interest. Data was collected by systematically observations of the school building and this was recorded (Hair *et al.,* 2003). This data also included photography of the physical environment focusing on the use of the Irish language in the school. Interviews involved the researcher speaking to the respondent directly, asking questions and recording answers. It is a very useful technique for collecting data which would probably not be accessible using techniques such as observation or questionnaires. The interview followed a predetermined structure and followed an interview sequence information was forwarded by the interviewee. The semi-structure of the interview allowed for a free and open discussion on the topic of interest.

1.7.3 Research approach adopted – Case study

The case study, as a research design, guided the research from the questions to the conclusion and include steps for collecting, analysing and interpreting evidence according to pre-established propositions (Yin, 2003). It sought “insight rather than statistical analysis” (Bell, 1999, p. 7) usually emphasising words rather than quantification (Bryman, 2004, p. 366). Secondly, it is not a sampling research as it is my wish to investigate how the promotion of the language can be progressed in one school, in my case, a coeducational post-primary school in which I have been employed for 22 years. As the case study is situated in the researcher’s school it provides the empirical context which Bassey (1999) describes as having a localised boundary of space and time. This proximity to the organisation enables the researcher to catch, close, the reality and thick description of participants’ lived experiences. It enables an opportunity to ascertain a description of thoughts, and feelings about the Irish language giving a detailed description of data (Geertz, 1973). Not only is it “geographically convenient” (Yin 2003, p. 79), but it is also considered that the informants, as colleagues, students and parents of students, would be “congenial and accessible” (Yin 2003, p. 79). The case was not be studied primarily to understand other cases which echo my obligations to thoroughly understand this one case. However, I do

envisage that practitioners will be able to act upon the research findings and as a result my case study should be best viewed as ‘a step to action’ (Cohen *et al*., 2007).

Before embarking on the case study, I recognised the necessity to approach with caution (Cohen *et al.,* 2007) beginning first with a wide focus for initial data gathering (Nisbit & Watt, 1984). As a case study generates a large amount of data from multiple sources it is imperative that the researcher, being the primary instrument (Merriam, 1988), be familiar with aspects of data collection and analysis. This prevents the researcher from becoming overwhelmed by the amount of data and to prevent the loss of sight of the original research purpose and questions (Gillham, 2005).

1.8 Positionality

My own positionality as a senior teacher of Irish in the organisation under study and as the only native speaker in the organisation undoubtedly will mediate the relationships between interviewees and the researcher, and conversations about the Irish language. Mercer (2007) refers to this as being an ‘insider’ that moves along a continuum, and that in some interviews topics may appear to engender a greater degree of insiderness. To counteract my positionality, I was committed to ensuring that the findings were a true reflection from an etic perspective (the stakeholders’ perspectives), and not an emic perspective, (i.e. me as the researcher) (Anderson, 1998). To assist me in this aim a post-primary teacher of Irish who had gained a Master of Education from the University of Leeds became my critical friend throughout the research and was a confidant and critiqued my work throughout the analysis of the data.

As a researcher, I had to be aware of reciprocity in terms of sharing experiences, as this too may have led participants to say what they thought was wanted in an effort to please (Wilson, 1996). This would have reduced the quality of information being sought which seeks their own personal views on promoting the language (Creswell, 2008). This was alleviated by ensuring that the aims and objectives of the study were known to participants, emphasising that what is being sought are their honest opinions and

experiences in relation to the Irish language. By creating a comfortable and relaxed environment prior to the interview aided in enabling the researcher to speak with the participant in a very informal manner – almost like a conversation rather than a formal interview. Also, participants were made aware that there were no right or wrong answer just their true opinions were required. This careful planning, explaining the research prior to the project, creating a relationship of trust with the participants, mediated a sense of solidarity which is a key factor in interpretive research (Cukor-Avila & Bailey, 2001).

1.9 Conclusion

In the introductory chapter the background to the study was outlined, with a focus on the Irish language and with reference to the impact that the education system and curricular approaches have had on the language. Rationale for the study are many but absence of use, economic rationale and the gap in research were highlighted and discussed. Research aims were discussed, and research questions outlined. The theoretical framework that informs the research was discussed as to its relevance to this study. The context in which the study is set along with the philosophical underpinnings and my position as the researcher within the process was highlighted. While schools alone are incapable of restoring the Irish language (Ó Laoire, 2005) there is a recognition that acquisition of the language will be hampered until the language is encouraged and fostered outside of the school (Ó Cathain, 1993). As Irish is not spoken in the English-speaking area (*Galltacht*), where the students live, the suggestion is to create an environment where Irish is more readily available. By practicing their Irish in the school environment, it may alleviate anxieties students may have to use Irish outside of the school.

Chapter two, led by the research questions and the theoretical framework adopted, takes a comprehensive study and critical review of the literature of the main topics. Chapter three discusses the research methodology employed and the data analysis procedures used. Chapter four reports the

findings from this exploratory case study to each of the three research questions and briefly discusses these in relation to the literature. In chapter five the findings are explored and discussed. However, on completion of the analysis of the data which were guided by Spolsky's Language Policy Model it became apparent that a different theoretical lens would be beneficial when discussing the findings. Spolsky's language policy model was a guide for extracting the information regarding langauge practices, beliefs and management but as to how stakeholders visualised their role in Irish language promotion an alternative theory was employed. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 1 language use and learning are not conceptually inseparable and learning of any kind is rooted in and shaped by particularized social practices. Therefore, it became apparent that the study would be strengthened by viewing the findings using a social learning theoretical lens. Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of situated learning underpinned by Vygotsky's theories of learning became the lens through which the findings were discussed.

Finally, chapter 6 brings together the new findings, being cognisant of the strengths and weakness of the research. Implications for further research and action will be forwarded for further practice and its possible implications for planning an Irish language policy for this school.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

'The dark soft languages are
being silenced:
Mothertongue, Mothertongue,
Mothertongue,
Falling one by one back
into the moon.'
Margaret Atwood, (1995)

2.1 Introduction

The Irish language has a long and interesting history with a rich literature and where lexical changes occurred with each wave of cultural migration. Therefore, language shift and decline has been a prominent theme in debate on the Irish language since the twelfth century which escalated in the nineteenth century. Since the foundation of the state in 1923 there have been interesting movements, some in favour, and some against, at both micro and macro level of the country regarding the language. Today, it still survives but as a first language of 3% of the population while more Irish language is now spoken outside of the Irish speaking areas than within (O'Rourke and Nandi, 2019). Its survival is due to the language being compulsory in Irish state schools for the duration of a student's time there. Yet, despite such state policies and planning in promoting the language, it has not been sufficiently acquired and is not widely spoken or used for a myriad of reasons. To investigate how the language could be promoted in an English-medium post-primary school, Spolsky's language policy theoretical framework was adapted to capture the views of stakeholders in a single case study.

A language requires people to speak it. In order to find out why they do or do not, it is necessary to ascertain how they perceive their level of competency in the four main language skills, where they learned (if any) their Irish, what their experiences of Irish language acquisition was and what knowledge they have today of governmental initiatives to promote the language in Ireland.

Having gained an insight into their linguistic abilities in Irish and into how the language was acquired a further investigation into their attitudes and beliefs about the language, about their ideologies regarding the language and about how they view the language, as part of Irish identity and of their own identity, gives a deeper understanding of how they may be committed to broadening the use of the Irish language in the school environment.
Finally, stakeholders' views on how they perceive the proposed policy being implemented gives an insight into perspectives on language management which bring into play issues of language planning and language policy.
Hence the literature review will circulate around the main themes of

- History of the Irish language
- Global decline of languages and language loss
- Language use and what census data and surveys tell us
- Language attitude and beliefs
- Language ideologies,
- Language identity
- Language management
  - Language planning
  - Language policy

This chapter reviews the literature pertaining to the many aspects that impact on language acquisition, language ideologies, and language maintenance. The chapter begins with a brief historical summary of how the decline of this once widely spoken language occurred. To look at this historical literature gives a better understanding to the reader of what obstacles have been and are in place in the endeavour suggested in this project (Keegan & Evas, 2012). Next, the literature on the global discussion on language decline takes place, with emphasis on where the Irish language case is situated in the classifications of language that are in danger of demise.

The chapter continues viewing the research and literature retaining primarily to language policy. While other theories and frameworks were considered the complexity in selecting one that would suit a single organisational was

best addressed by Spolsky. Spolsky Language Policy Model deals with language use, language attitudes and beliefs, language ideologies and identities. Spolsky's model encompasses an area of research made more complex by the similarity of the different terms which are often used interchangeably when discussing language identity and language ideology and in discussions on language policy, language planning and language management. The final research question deals with language management and a brief discussion follows on how national and international literature have interpreted the field with an emphasis on the importance of planning and policy for an endangered language.

2.2 History of the language

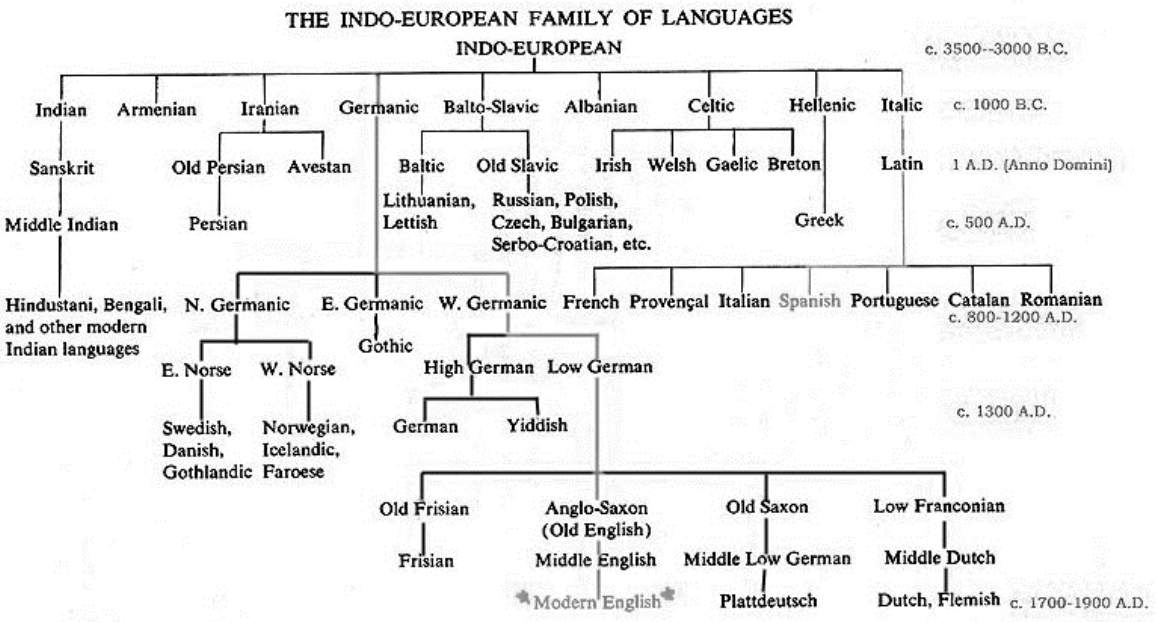
Walsh (2005, p. 2) highlights that a "few historians engage in a critical way with the implications of the decline and revival" of the Irish language and claims that the language is more or less neglected by other disciplines where it could be discussed. Where it is discussed, Walsh (2005, p. 9) claims, it is inadequate at answering questions in relation to the impact of decline and revival and not enough attention has been paid to its history this century. While outside the remit of this study to investigate the historical context of language shift in detail, a historical perspective is necessary to understand the way the decline occurred. Keegan and Evas (2012, p. 45) claim that "present day language planners need to be aware of the historical bases of the situations they view today". Therefore, this chapter commences with a brief discussion of the historical context of the Irish language in the Republic of Ireland.

Irish and its offshoots, Scottish Gaelic and Manx, constitute the Gaelic, Goidelic or Q-Celtic branch of the Celtic languages. Welsh, Cornish and Breton and the now extinct Gaulish form the Brittonic or P-Celtic group (Fig.2.1). The Irish language is an Indo-European language brought to Ireland around 500 BC by the Celts (Ó Siadhail, 1989; Ó Laoire, 2005) with archaeologists and historical linguists claiming to have traced the arrival of early waves of Irish speakers from Spain (Carnie, 1995). According to Ellis (1985) the Celts were a linguistic group, not a racial one, adding that their

language and culture were the only things that distinguished the Celtic peoples from the other peoples of Europe.

Irish is recorded to be one of the oldest and most historic written languages in the world (Nettle & Romaine, 2000; Government of Ireland, 2010). It has been argued that the first written sources of the language date from the early Christian period - between about 400 and 600 AD (Carnie 1995, p. 2). At that time, Ireland was the centre of learning in Western Europe and the language flourished, with large amounts of literature being written (Carnie, 1995). "What were the Dark Ages in the rest of Europe was the Golden Age for Irish" (Carnie, 1995, p. 2). This classical period of 'Old Irish' came to an end as a result of Viking invasions who plundered the monasteries leading to many of the Irish scholars fleeing abroad which led to a less defined language norm known as 'Middle Irish' developing in the period 900 – 1150 AD (Greene, 1969, p. 19).

Figure 2. 1 The Indo European Family of Languages



Source: http://www.linguatics.com/indoeuropean_languages.htm

The Anglo-Norman conquest of Ireland (beginning in 1107) marked a substantial linguistic and cultural shift when Norman French, and later Old

English settled in Ireland (Cronin, 1996; Ó Laoire, 2005) establishing their political authority over the Irish but they switched to Irish (Curtis, 1919; Cahill, 1938), eventually becoming “more Irish than the Irish themselves” (O'Byrne, 2007, p. 311). Despite successive invasions, Irish was the primary language spoken on the Island until the 1600s. British control strengthened, particularly during and after a series of plantations from Britain, where Irish speaking farmers, were evicted from their property and moved to poorer lands in different parts of the country (Carnie, 1995), and replaced by English-speaking farmers (Hindley, 1990). The Statutes of Kilkenny in 1366 record the first example of official oppression against the Irish language and it highlighted how English affected the towns and cities. Irish was banned from the courtroom and for use in commerce (Hindley, 1990). By 1780, social and demographics changes brought about by the industrial revolution, caused a decline in the usage of Irish around Dublin and the Pale (Carnie, 1995). The industrial revolution caused language shift from Irish to English as people moved from the countryside to the cities and towns. English was the language of commerce and employment therefore, in many segments of the population, a pronounced language shift took place. Now, the peasantry were the predominate section of the countryside population to converse in Irish.

“The reason for neither bilingualism nor diglossia establishing themselves in Ireland on a large scale probably lies in the language shift in the 19th century” (Hickey, 2009, p. 65). At that time, diverse factors contributed to huge drop in native Irish speakers. Mortality rates from the famine and subsequent mass immigration resulted in a massive and speedy language shift. Prior to the Great Famine (1845-8) up to 50% of the population spoke Irish. By the end of the 19th century, 50 years later, this figure had been reduced to not more than 10% (Hickey, 2009). Emigration during and after the famine was to predominantly English-speaking places, so a whole generation of Irish speakers was lost, placing more emphasis on the importance of English in their lives as emigration could only be considered if they spoke English. To improve their position in Irish society and to gain an acceptable level of education a notable shift from Irish was evident (Hindley

1990). Irish was now connected to the realms of poverty and lack of social acceptance (Carnie, 1995).
The nineteenth century also saw the National School system (introduced in 1830's) forcing student to speak English in Irish speaking areas and the tally stick, (Irish: *bata scóir*), was used to punish children who were found speaking Irish (Hickey, 2009). This was not conducive to promoting voluntary use of Irish in the home inhibiting the domestic language throughout the country forcing "a rapid and forceful language shift" (Hickey, 2009, p. 69).

By the end of the 19th century attempts at language revival, as the republican home-rule movement grew in strength, there was a significantly increase in the promotion of the language among non-native speakers. The English governmental reaction to this was to suppress Irish culture and language (Carnie 1995, p. 3). As a result, the Irish language became emblematically associated with the Republican movement. The Gaelic League was set up in 1893 with the aim to promote the language revival. By 1900, Irish could be taught in schools for one hour per week.

The establishment of the Irish Free State in 1921 saw the island of Ireland being divided into two parts: The Free State and Northern Ireland. The 1922 Constitution granted Irish the status of national and official language but was elevated to 'first official language' in the revised Constitution of 1937 (Ó Máille, 1990, p. 3). It was their aim to replace English with Irish outside the *Gaeltacht* (re-Gaelicisation) and ensure Irish remained the primary language of the people in the *Gaeltacht* regions (Ó Riagáin, 1988, 1988; Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005). This support for the language reinforced the language revival movement. Further support followed as Irish became an obligatory examination for general grades in the civil services (Ó Riain, 1994) even though once employed it was no longer obligatory to use it (Ó Riain, 1994). However, in 1965, bilingualism replaced re-Gaelicisation as a national policy (Government of Ireland, 1965) and many institutions removed their support for the language following this (Ó Murchú, 2003; Ó Laighin, 2003). Again in 1974 Irish was discontinued as a compulsory examination for entrance into the civil service (Ó Riain, 1994).

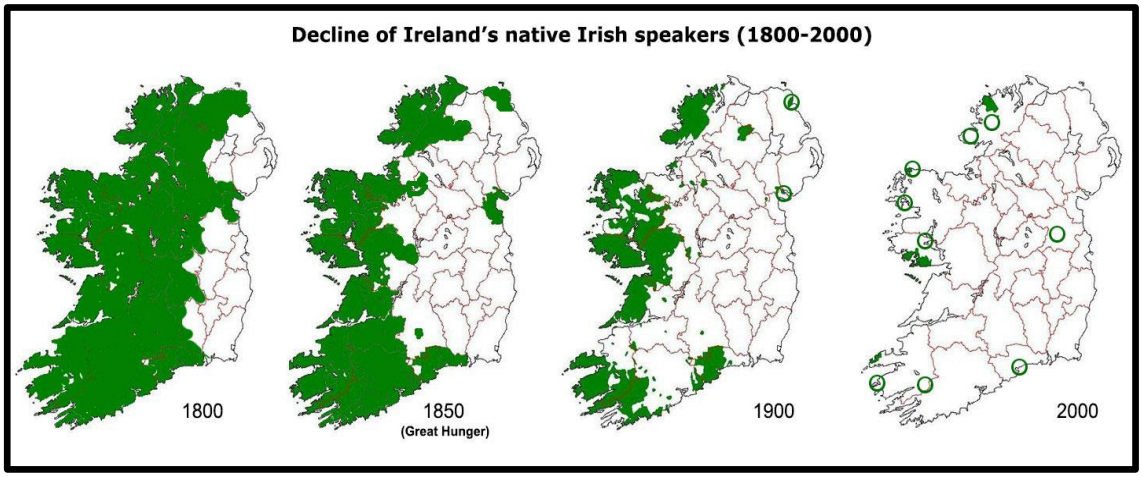
The year 1977 saw the beginning of a campaign, which continued and gathered momentum in the late 1980's and early 1990's, regarding a "Bill of Rights for the Irish language" which sought provision of services for Irish speakers. In recent years it is still a compulsory element for some civic occupations such as primary school teaching and a study commented that "Irish speakers had an advantage in obtaining professional occupations in the Republic of Ireland". (Boorah *et al.,* 2009, p. 457). Government issued voluntary guidelines to the state sector regarding services through the medium of Irish in 1993 (Bord na Gaeilge, 1993), however they were largely ignored (Bord na Gaeilge, 1995, 1996; Ó Cinnéide & Ní Chonghaile, 1996). The Official Language (Equality) Bill was published in 2002 and the Official Languages Act was signed into law in July 2003 granting constitutional recognition as both the national language, and an official language to Irish. In 2006 the Irish Government issued a Statement on the Irish Language. Thirteen key objectives were identified in the Statement, each in support of the Irish language and the *Gaeltacht*. "Preservation as well as promotion and development" of the Irish language is illuminated throughout the Statement (Ó Flathartha, 2007, p. 3).

Irish was accepted as an Official Language of the European Union in 2007 and in 2010 the '20 Year Strategy for the Irish language 2010-2030' was launched, through which the government hopes to extend Irish-English bilingualism to as many citizens as possible. Further aims are to maximize the number of families throughout the state who use Irish daily, and to increase the visibility of Irish in society (Government of Ireland, 2010). Despite all this intervention Irish is recognised as a language that is in decline and at risk of being lost.

2.3 Language Decline

An awareness that is central to this study is that Irish is a language in decline (See Fig. 2.2) and as a result, it is worth focusing on its relationship with the broader global context of the threat posed to linguistic diversity.

Figure 2. 2 Decline of native Irish speakers (1800 - 2000)



(Source: https://i.imgur.com/jjwsZO4.jpg)

"Throughout human history, the languages of powerful groups have spread while the languages of smaller cultures have become extinct" (Majzuba & Rais, 2011, p. 1678). The threat posed by English, the dominant language in Ireland, to the Irish language is underlined by the importance of English on the world stage in the 21st century (Whaley, 2003). Although Irish could be classified as being a 'minority' language in terms of numbers of speakers, because of its official status it cannot be considered a minority or lesser-used language. Nevertheless, UNESCO has classed Gaeilge (Irish) as being "definitely endangered" in global terms (UNESCO, 2009; cited in Lenihan, 2011) and as being 'vulnerable' (UNESCO, 2010 cited in Lenihan, 2011) and is in danger of being one of the world's six thousand or so languages that are in danger of extinction (Crystal, 2000; McCloskey, 2001).

An endangered language is "a language that may soon vanish, ceasing to be used as a vehicle of communication, perhaps even disappearing completely from human history (Derhemi, 2002, p. 151)". An endangered language is not necessarily a minority language, and not every minority language is necessarily endangered. However, there is "a high probability that with time a neglected minority language will become endangered" (Derhemi, 2002, p. 151).

At a time when "it is estimated that 80% of the world's 6,000 or so living languages will die within the next century" (Crystal, 1997, p. 17), "language

endangerment is increasingly seen as a topic that primarily concerns linguists" (Nettle & Romaine, 2000, p. 23). Endangered languages are therefore alarmingly threatened (Yamamoto, 2001).

Table 2. 1. Census data indicating the % who state they can speak Irish

Year of Census	Percentage of population who could speak Irish
1996	41.1 %
2002	41.9 %
2006	40.8 %
2011	41.4%
2016	39.4%

(Source: CSO, 2017)

2.3.1 Language loss and its impact.

Linguistic diversity is essential to the human heritage as each language enshrines the unique cultural wisdom of a people. Therefore, loss of any language is a loss for all humanity (Yamamoto, 2001). Crystal (1997, p 40-41) supporting this notion says that a whole community's history and a large part of its cultural identity is enshrined in a language. "The world is a mosaic of visions. With each language that disappears, a piece of that mosaic is lost" (Rodriques, cited in Crystal, 2000, p. 45).

All involved in the study of language decline acknowledge the urgent need for language documentation, new policy initiatives, and new materials to enhance the vitality of languages (Yamamoto, 2001). While partially disagreeing with this concept Paulston, (1994, p. 12, citing the work of Lieberson *et al.*, 1975, p. 56), asserts that language and culture can be separated and believes that culture can be maintained without a language. However, Fishman believes that something vital to the culture of the people who spoke the language is lost when a language is lost. He explains;

> “What is lost when a language is lost, especially in the short run, is the sociocultural integration of the generations, the cohesiveness, naturalness and quiet creativity, the secure sense of identity, even without politicized consciousness of identity, the sense of collective worth of a community of a people” (Fishman, 1995, pp. 60-61).

Crystal (2000, pp. 44-45) argues that “identity and history are combined together to ensure that each language reflects a unique interpretation or vision of human existence”. Therefore, there are things to be learned from language. For example, a crucial theme in literature at various levels of intellectual depth is that languages, other than the native language, provide people with a means of personal growth.

Crystal believes that:

> “… all over the world, encounters with indigenous peoples bring to light a profound awareness of fauna and flora, rocks and soils, climatic cycles and their impact on the land, the interpretation of the landscape, and the question of the balance of natural forces... And it is language that unifies everything, linking environmental practice with cultural knowledge, and transmitting everything synchronically among the members of a community, as well as diachronically between generations” (2000, pp. 46-47).

It is further acknowledged that when a language is lost, much of the knowledge that language represents, and unspoken network of cultural values, is also gone, lowering the pool of knowledge from which we can draw (Scollon & Scollon, 1981). Although these values generally operate on a subliminal level, these values are, nonetheless, a major force in the shaping of each person’s self-awareness, identity, and interpersonal relationships (Scollon & Scollon, 1981). Many supporters of endangered languages claim that when a language dies out, a unique way of looking at the world also disappears (Fishman, 1989; Nettle & Romaine, 2000; Dalby, 2002). Others assert that when a language becomes extinct, “a unique creation of human beings, that houses a treasure of information and preserves a people's identity are lost” (Grimes, 2001, cited in Sallabank, 2013, p. 22). ‘Because every last word means another lost world’ is the

motto of the Hans Rausing Endangered Language Project (cited in Sallabank, 2013, p. 22) while Bruce Cole, Chairman of the US National Endowment for the Humanities Documenting Endangered Languages stated that “Language is the DNA of a culture, and it is the vehicle for the traditions, customs, stories, history, and beliefs of a people. A lost language is a lost culture” (SIL International, 2010). This view is related to notions that a language is tied to particular local conditions (Mühlhäusler, 2000, p. 335), territory (Laponce, 1987) and culture. The loss of a language would represent a profound silence (Solash, 2010).

2.3.2 Globalisation

One of the primary linguistic issues facing the world in the 21st century, according to Zuo (2007), is the extinction of a substantial proportion of the world’s languages. The endangerment of the minority languages is caused by several factors which includes technological, social, cultural and economic trends of globalization. As a result, much cultural and linguistic knowledge is “vanishing due to the change in the globalization phase … [and] is of great concern to linguists” (Majzuba & Rais, 2011, p. 1678). Zuo (2007), cited in Majzuba & Rais (2011, p. 1678) further stated that the extinction of minority languages around the world is due to the existence of the “free market” ideology of globalization and “it occurs because of cultural and linguistic homogenization”. Important changes have occurred around the world in economics, technology and politics due to globalisation and according to Ó Laoire (2008, p. 205) these has been responsible for a rapid change in sets of beliefs, values and attitudes.

The decline is happening at a greater intensity than at any other time in recorded history and yet, in comparison with other international issues such as poverty or environmental degradation, has received relatively little attention (Walsh, 2005). Skutnabb-Kangas (2002, p. 13) concurs that while there is great concern for the loss of bio-diversity, linguistic diversity is diminishing at a much faster rate. According to the National Geographic Society’s Enduring Voices Project, which features a map of “Language

hotspots," (cited by Rice, 2012, p. 302), a language dies out every 14 days. Europe is the most linguistically impoverished contentment with only 3% of the world's language, in comparison to Africa and Asia, which have about 30% each) (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2002, p. 7). Irish is at risk of joining the vanishing languages. According to Argenter (2002, p. 797), "Celtic languages – Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Cornish, Manx, and Welsh – are well advanced among the vanishing languages of Europe". This study is yet another attempt to halt the decline of the Irish language by attempting to understand the beliefs, values and attitudes of stakeholders in a rural school in the west of Ireland. To gain a deeper insight into this phenomena Spolsky's model of language policy has been deployed.

2.4 Spolsky's model of language policy

As explained in Chapter 1, the conceptual framework underpinning this research is that of Spolsky's language policy model (See Figure 1.2). For scholars interested in using frameworks to try to understand the field of language planning and policy, Baldauf (2012) has posited that there are four basic approaches used to draw together aspects of the theoretical literature, namely a Classical, a Language Management, a Domain, or a Critical approach. There were remembrance of all approaches that would serve the purpose of this study however a domain framework, encompassing components of the others and more focused on micro-level langauge planning attempts was the one chosen and deemed most suitable.

As the Classical approaches were more focused on macro-level langauge planning rather than the micro-level language planning the frameworks were unhelpful for this study. However, they were useful in providing a number of valuable concepts and understanding to the area of language planning (Haugen,1983; Kaplan and Baldauf, 1997, 2003; Baldauf, 2005).

While the approaches of the Language Management Theory (LTM) reversed this perspective and emphasized the practices of the speakers ("agency") it too was rejected. It was believed to serve more frequently Governments as they plan for a systematic, future-oriented change in language code (corpus

planning), in language use (status planning), in learning and speaking (language-in-education planning) and/or language promotion (prestige planning). It involves deliberate, although not always overt, future oriented change in systems of langauge code and/or speaking ina a societal context (Rubin & Jernudd 1971).

The Critical approach was also rejected as its focus was on power, struggle, hegemony, ideology and resistance and at this stage of investigation would have not yielded the relevant data to forward relevant information that would assist in ascertain prospects and possibilities of promoting the Irish langauge in the school outside of the Irish langauge classroom.

The Domain approach to langauge planning, introduced into sociolinguistics by Fishman (1972) but later developed by Spolsky (2004, 2009), speaks of domain as a "named social space such as home or family, school neighbourhood [or] church…" (Spolsky, 2009, p.3). He argues that "each domains has its own policy, with some features managed internally and others under the influences of forces external to the domain" (Spolsky, 2009, p. 3). The participants in a domain are characterised " not as individuals but by their social roles and relationships" (Spolsky, 2009, p. 3). He recognises the typical location of a domain connecting "social and physical reality – people and places". With Spolsky three component langauge policy model (namely, linguistic practices, linguistic beliefs and language management) create an encompassing framework for this study to ascertain the present situation of the langauge in this school organisation and offering insights into how a language policy could be designed. Spolsky's model affords the flexibility for it to be used as a conceptual model for this work, allowing for both a top-down and bottom-up perspectives of the language to be investigated.

The first tenet of Spolsky's model considers language practice, which are "the sum of the sound, word and grammatical choices that an individual speaker makes" (Spolsky, 2004, p. 9) in what he calls a linguist ecology. Language practices or language use refer to language use in both its written and spoken form. Language practices may influence and be influenced by

language beliefs and language management. These practices are concerned with "what actually happens, the 'real' language policy of the community" (Spolsky, 2012, p. 5). It allows a study of the current knowledge and usage of the language. Examining language practise also "studies the way in which members of a speech community use their language(s) rather than how they should use their language(s)" (Burges, 2017, p. 31). In the Irish context for example, there is a disparity, as seen earlier, between official statements about language and language use in Ireland. The second tenet involves ideology, beliefs and attitudes stakeholders have in relation to a language and how they express their identity in relation to that language. The third part of the model deals with language management (language planning/policy) and allows for the investigation of the possibilities of broadening the use of the Irish language in one school community.

2.4.1 Language ecology.

The biological ecosystem was adapted to the linguistic environment in the 1960's and 1970's (Hornberger & Hult, 2008, p. 208). The metaphor of a biological ecosphere can be applied to linguistic environments (Calvet, 2006, pp. 23-24). A linguistic environment, as is the biological ecosystem, is made up of several layers – languages and their users situated (ecological niches) within a global ecosphere comprising of smaller ecosystems (social and political entities) (Calvet, 2006, p. 24).

Haugen clearly articulates it in saying that "language ecology is concerned with examining the interaction of languages, their users and the language environment in which the speakers interact" (Haugen, 1972, p. 325). It includes the influences of people and environment on each other (Ogbu, 1974). Hornberger and Hult clarify the ecology metaphor suggesting that:

> "Languages evolve in the context of a social environment where some languages are more equal than others…Languages, like living species, evolve, grow, change, live, and die in relation to other languages and also in relation to their sociohistorical, socio-political, and sociocultural environments" (2008, p. 280).

With an ecological orientation, micro-level discourse about language (in this instance the Irish language) and micro level discourse on individual's beliefs and language use in the local context is of value to contributing knowledge of how best to proceed with an organisational plan to broaden the use of the language.

However, literature shows that the ecological landscape for language comprises of several layers (Calvet, 2006; Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; Mühlhäusler, 2000) like that of an onion (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). The outer layer consists of broad language policy objectives as legislated for at national level. The inner layer comprising of policies that are "interpreted and implemented in institutional settings, which are composed of diverse, situated contexts (e.g. schools…)" (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996, p. 409). In this model the individual agents who implement policy are in the centre of the onion, who in this study are the all the stakeholders who implement current national policy and who are required to implement a broadening of the language policy in the school if required. According to Ricento (2000, p. 208) "the role(s) of individuals and collectivises in the processes of language use, attitudes and ultimately policies" are important to consider in language planning and policy because it is the individual who creates, interpret and implement policy. The ecological orientation is appropriate therefore for investigating the role of stakeholders' use and attitudes about language.

However, Hornberger and Hull (2008, p. 9-10) believe:

> "Language ecology is not a theoretical framework, nor does it specify any particular set of data collection techniques or analytic methods and they call for a discourse analytic method which will be productive in accessing both micro and macro discourses with the language planning and policy landscape".

A model "well suited to the systematic investigation of language policy and language planning discourses" (Hult, 2010, p. 10) is Scollon & Scollon's (2004) nexus analysis, a discourse analytic meta methodology (Hult, 2010). Scollon & Scollon focus on three discursive elements of a social action:

- An individual's history body (which is the life experiences of the stakeholder, where the language was learned, and experiences of learning are examined. Scollon & Scollon (2004, p. 13) suggest, "different people play the same role differently depending on their history of personal experience".
- The interaction order (how individuals feel using the language in different situations "the way an individual behaves in a given interaction is influenced by the role the person assumes and the relationship the individual has with the other people in the interaction" (Scollon & Scollon, 2004, p. 13). So, this allows for investigation of how using the language make individuals feel in different situations
- The discourses in place (where stakeholders use the language, what sites, situations).

Spolsky's model of language policy allows for a nexus analysis as proposed by Scollon & Scollon (2004).

2.4.1.1 Language use and census data

The people of Ireland's attitude towards the Irish language and their perception of their use of the language has been documented in various census data. However, census data are considered tentatively as the question on Irish language usage is speculative, as respondents self-report their ability to speak Irish. An 'Irish Speaker' could be a novice or fluent speaker, so replies give little data on Irish language proficiency and according to Carnie (1995) the replies are most likely exaggerated.

Various research papers suggest that despite the positive views expressed in census data, few people speak Irish as their first language in their communities (Benton, 1986; Mac Gréil & Rhatigan, 2009) or in their homes (Benton, 1986; Ó Riagáin, 2008) and even in the Irish speaking areas that the language is diminishing (Ó Riagáin, 2008; Ó Giollagáín & Mac Donnacha, 2008).

2.4.1.2 Willingness To Communicate

In any policy on language, and in particular a minority language, the

willingness of the community to use the language is an important component of any investigation. Willingness to Communicate (WTC), derived from the notion of 'unwillingness to communicate' from communication in L1 (Burgoon, 1976), can be viewed as the "readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2" (McIntyre *et al.*, 1998, p. 547). These authors purpose that a broader range of variables affect one's readiness to communicate in an L2 than in L1.

McIntyre *et al*.(1998) pyramid model is of interest here. According to the WTC model, a positive disposition towards using the target language is likely to result in the learner responding to opportunities to use the target language. This is relevant to this study as policy designers must be aware of the different levels and conditions at play, and of the importance of attempting to create a positive disposition. It was evident throughout the study that personal attributes were strong indicators of who would willingly abide to a policy on broadening the use of the Irish language but there were individuals who were not enthusiastic of any form of intervention and therein lies the challenge. Experience communicating in the target language, in turn, is likely both to benefit the development of communicative competence and contribute to this communicative disposition in future.

2.4.2 Language Attitude and beliefs

Actual language *use* results from the "co-presence of capacity, opportunities, and positive attitudes" (Government of Ireland, 2010, p. 7). Attitude and beliefs, as mentioned above, towards a language impacts and influences why individuals act, how they interact and where they interact using the language. Therefore, a literature review on attitude is necessary.

"Attitudes do not exist at all until an individual perceives an attitude object (on a conscious or unconscious basis) and responds to it on an explicit or implicit basis" (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007, p. 584). An attitude has been

described as “a disposition to react favourably or unfavourably to a class of objects” (Sarnoff, 1970, p. 279, cited in Garrett *et al.,* 2003, pp. 2-3), and it is “a combination of cognitive, affective and behavioural elements where the attitude is the end product of the process” (Bohner, 2001, p. 241). The cognitive element refers to certain beliefs about the world, the affective element referring to feelings about the language while the behavioural element refers to how we react or behave in a certain way because of our attitude towards the object which in this study is the Irish language.

Garrett *et al.* (2003) and Garett (2010) view attitudes as having a double function – having an input to, and an output from, social action. Regarding language, if a student has a positive attitude it can impact on the student’s performance to do well when acquiring a language. The relationship between attitude and behaviour is a key issue in studying attitude (Garrett, 2010, p. 25) and is important to this research. However, the relationship is a complex one (Garett, 2010) as attitude is only one of the factors that account for the intended behaviour and the actual behaviour. Bohner (2001) believes that there has to be a shift from studying attitudes towards objects, to looking at attitudes towards behaviour in Irish language use. He explains that looking at studying attitude towards the object alone (the language) cannot be used to make predictions of future behaviour” (Bohner, 2001, p. 271). The public attitude towards the Irish language, as an endangered one, has an impact on the survival of that language (Darmond and Daly, 2015).

Attitudes are expressed (through positive or negative behaviours) towards a willingness to learn a language or towards speakers of a language. If a language is seen as an important part of one’s identity, a person is more likely to speak it and be interested in maintaining the language (Edwards, 2010). Darmody & Daly (2015) also report that those more favourable towards the Irish language were significantly more likely to speak Irish more frequently, than those who were indifferent or opposed to the language. Cargile, *et al*. (1994, p. 221) views “…the nature of language attitudes as being “three-dimensional”. The attitude is cognitive in that attitudes comprise of ‘beliefs about the world’, affective in that they are constructed ‘feelings

about an attitude object, and behavioural in that they ‘encourage certain actions”.

Attitude towards the Irish language on the Island of Ireland (Darmody & Daly, 2015), a qualitative study, explored in one of their questions, whether the respondents were in favour of, or opposed to, the Irish language using a five-point Likert scare (from ‘strongly opposed to strongly in favour’). In comparing the results with a similar *Irish Language Survey 2001* (Foras na Gaeilge, 2001) they found that positive attitudes towards the Irish language had increased in the interim. This positive attitude has been evident in research on the Irish language as expressed in many studies (CILAR, 1975; ITÉ, 1983, 1993; Ó Riagáin and Ó Gliasáin, 1984, 1994; Irish Marketing Surveys, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1982, 1985; Mac Gréil, 1990; Mac Gréil & Rhatigan, 2009; Darmody & Daly, 2015). In the Mac Gréil & Rhatigan (2009) survey, data revealed, for example, that only 6.7% of people would like to see Irish discarded. The remainder would like to see it preserved (52.9%) for its cultural value and spoken in the *Gaeltacht*, revived (38%) into a bilingual Irish/English speaking society, or revived (2.4%) into an Irish speaking community. Indications of the Irish language seen as an ethnic symbol of cultural identification was evident in earlier studies also (Ó Fathaigh, 1997; Ó Riagáin, 2007). The positive attitude continued in a 2013 survey which highlighted that “four-in-five adults in the Republic agreed that Irish language should be available as a subject in schools” (Darmody & Daly, 2015, p. ix).

On the other hand, a secondary analysis of the “Growing up in Ireland” (GUI) and post-primary longitude study data indicate that the student attitude towards Irish, when compared to other core subjects, “tend to be more negative” (Darmody & Daly 2015, p. viii) where Mathematics and English were considered more useful. The analysis shows that first year students consider Mathematics (91%) and English (81%) more useful than Irish (50%). Irish was also considered less useful than another language in the curriculum (74%). Just over half of first-years considered the ‘other language’ interesting (57%), followed by English (54 %), Mathematics (49%) and Irish (36%). English was considered to be the least difficult (12%),

followed by Mathematics (35%), 'other language' (47%) and Irish (49%). The study indicated that the same trend continued for senior students in their fifth year of post-primary school. In fifth year, the same cohort of students considered Mathematics (78 %), French (71%) and English (69%) more useful than Irish (40%). English (48%) was considered to be more interesting than Irish (25%). While in previous years Irish was considered difficult, by fifth year Mathematics (59%) is considered to be somewhat more difficult than Irish (56%). In sixth year, English, Mathematics and French continue to be seen as more interesting and useful subjects than Irish. In terms of level of difficulty, French and German were seen as more difficult than Irish (see Smyth *et al*., 2011 for further discussion). Darmody & Daly (2012, p. ix) summarise in their study that "students' negativity towards Irish remains constant throughout their post-primary schooling". However, positivity toward the language tended to come from students attending Irish-medium primary schools. Parental positivity towards the Irish language who enrolled their children in Irish-medium schools may have also have an impact on this result. The researchers indicated that the "principals of Irish medium and Gaeltacht schools were more likely to report that Irish language and culture were important for the ethos in the school than principals in English-medium schools". (Darmody & Daly, 2015, p. viii).

Other factors, age, area, educational background, marital status, parental status, occupational status, social status and gender, all contributed to the complexity of thoughts and feelings about language (Mc Gréil & Rhatigan, 2009, Ó Riagáin, 2007).

Ascertaining views on attitude can also supply information on current thoughts, beliefs, desires and preferences (Baker, 1992), views along with current perceptions and language use help language planners to promote effective use of the language (Ó Muircheartaigh & Hickey, 2008). The value of Irish was viewed as an integral part of an Irish person identity and Ireland's identity in research on the topic. The MORI survey (2004) recorded that 89% (of 1,200 respondents) believed that the maintenance of Irish was important to Ireland's. However, only 39% felt that using the language was

important to their identity. This has been observed in other papers with Mac Gréil & Rhatigan (2009, p. 68) commenting that the statements of competency in Irish were inconsistent with their use of Irish. McCubbin (2010, p. 458) states that the "gap between the symbolic and (personal) instrumental importance attributed to Irish is long-standing and widening and Irish is becoming more commonly seen as a language that has lost its utility". English-medium parents, who reported a positive attitude …. towards Irish and their involvement and/or commitment in the process of their children's learning Irish, were found to give more help with Mathematics (70%) and English (48%) homework than with Irish homework (35%) (Harris & Murtagh, 1999). The same study indicates an indirect attitude towards Irish, where scholastic achievements in Irish received less praise from parents than other subjects, further highlighting the inconsistency between attitude and behaviour.

Several factors have been posited to explain the gap between intention (attitude) and action (behaviour) and it may be due to:

- A lack of motivation (Mac Gréil & Rhatigan, 2009);
- Limited opportunities within communities to use Irish and as a result many losing their ability to communicate effectively in Irish (Mac Gréil, 1990; Ó Fathaigh, 1997);
- A belief that they are unable to speak it as despite several years of Irish lessons there may be limited Irish conversational ability (Ó Riagáin & Gliasáin, 1984, 1994);
- Historically, the social standing of using Irish was low, and as a result a feeling of embarrassment ensued if one was heard speaking Irish (Mac Gréil & Rhatigan, 2009; Atkinson & Kelly-Holmes, 2011; Kelly-Holmes & Moriarty, 2007; Kelly-Holmes, 2006);
- Not being aware of other people's Irish language skills and therefore choosing English as the default language (CILAR, 1975).

Attitudes of post-primary teachers, mostly responsible for transferring Irish skills are worth noting in the context of this study of an English-medium post-primary school. Many English-medium teachers, some whom believe the

teaching of the Irish language is in crisis (Rathallaigh, 2005), called for a reduction in the hours of teaching Irish to focus on subjects like mathematics or science (Coady, 2001). At primary school level however, research shows that teachers (Carr, 2008) and parents (Harris and Murtagh, 1999; Ó Riagáin, 2007) are in favour of having Irish on the curriculum. For instance, whereas Ó Riagáin (2007) found 85.8% of parents preferred their children being taught Irish (71.1% would like it as a subject only on the curriculum), Harris & Murtagh (1999) found that 75% of parents were strongly/somewhat in favour" of their children being taught Irish.

Attitudes towards Irish can be shaped at the school level and are dependent on several factors forwarded by Darmody & Daly (2015);

- importance of teacher competency and curriculum (Harris & Murtagh, 1999);
- greater emphasis placed on oral work and aural skills in teaching (see Bygate, 2009).
- creating opportunities to practice language (Ó Duibhir & Cummins, 2012), (heritage clubs, various leisure and extracurricular activities) which may encourage young people to use the language more frequently;
- availability of resources, cost being a barrier to providing resources and services, grants could be made available for local initiatives to run free courses.

Pajares (1992) distinguishes between beliefs and knowledge, reinforcing the idea that beliefs were based on personal evaluation and judgment. To ascertain the beliefs of stakeholders in this study, for example, can only be gained using appropriate qualitative research paradigm. While there is a plethora of literature ascertaining views towards language promotion within the classroom, research papers examining beliefs about the use of language outside the classroom, and in particular in the immediate school environment, are scarce.

2.4.3 Ideology and identity debate

The concepts of identity and ideology are contested in social science. Studies have identified that self-interest is a more significant predictor of individual and social behaviour than identity and ideology (Jenkins, 2008; Bailey & Gayle, 2003). Indeed, some arguing that self-interest rather than ideology plays an important role in the formation and maintenance of one's identity (Esarey *et al.,* 2012); Svallfors, 2004; (Esping-Andersen, 1999). Others view ideologies as being decisive in the creation and preservation of specific collective identities (Malešević, 2011, 2006; Barker, 2001; Garry, 1992). Earlier work believed that collected behaviour could be moulded either by actions, speeches or declarations of a political, cultural elites or through effective propaganda movements of a state or large cooperations who control the mass media, education systems and other information outlets (Malešević, 2013). However, most perspectives acknowledge that social identities and ideologies tend to be interconnected in the everyday life.

Recent studies state that social organisations cannot easily impose their ideological belief systems or mould identities of the wider population (Malešević, 2013). Neither public opinion nor behaviour can be changed easily and that rather being a blunt instrument ideology operate through the more subtle social mechanisms. (Malešević, 2006, 2002; Freeden, 2003; Bourdon, 1989). Even when confronted with evidence to the contrary most individuals are reluctant to change their ideological commitments highlighting how ideological preferences are often rooted in one's social identity (Malešević, 2010). Studies from social psychologists highlight how individuals generally tend to absorb messages that they already approve of, or agree with, and reject or ignore those that question their ideological position or their social identity (Sunstein, 2001; Heuer, 1999; Weintraub, 1988, cited in Malešević, 2013). Sageman (2004) states that a change in a person's ideological outlook can be traced back to bottom-up, rather than top down processes. In other words, they are less influenced by opinions of political leaders, prominent intellectuals or journalists and specific ideology

and identity formation are rooted strongly in the micro universe of family, friends, neighbours, peers and one's locality.

There are methodological consequence due to the different interpretations insofar as some researchers tend to study ideology as a total concept and view entire social orders as more or less ideological (Eagleton, 2007; Hawkes, 2003) while other researchers focus on the impact of specific ideologies, such as liberalism, socialism, conservatism, nationalism, or religious fundamentalism on different social groups, organisations or societies (Freeden, 2003, 1996; Bourdon, 1989; Haywood, 2003).

This conceptual and theoretical rift can also be seen in the studies that investigate the relationships between identity and ideology. The restrictive approaches are more inclined to study the manipulative practices involved in the formation and distribution of ideological doctrines whereas the broader, inclusive, approaches insist on the flexibility and malleability of all belief systems (Malešević, 2006, 2002). The restrictive approaches see identities as being structurally embedded in social institutions while the inclusive approaches emphasise the autonomy of social agents (Malešević, 2006, 2002). Studying the two concepts apart also calls for clarification on terminology.

2.4.3.1 Ideology

The second tenet of Spolsky's model of language policy is the importance of assessing the language ideology, beliefs, values the organisation has in relation to a language. Regarding the concept of ideology, isolated in Spolsky's model from identity, there is no consensus among scholars regarding the concept.

Some researchers use restrictive definitions which conceive ideology as closed systems of beliefs that govern social actions while others operate using more inclusive definitions where ideology stands for distinct belief systems (Malešević, 2013). Ideology, in those two incidences, is perceived

as a powerful social force able to mould behaviour of individuals who are inclined to act contrary to their self-interest. The host of different definitions depends on the analytical tradition in which it is used (Gerring, 1997). It has been defined as 'a set of beliefs or attitudes shared by members of a particular social group' (Bloor & Bloor, 2007, p. 10). Mesthrie (2010, p. 320), acknowledging that it involves a set of beliefs, adds that it is the "speech and cultural practices that operate to the advantage of a particular social group". Taking the definition a step further van Dijk (2006), while focusing on four aspects, views ideology as a system of beliefs, as a component of the identity of a group, as the power of its domination; and as how stable the ideology is.

A certain ideology may be dominant in society, in an organisation, or in a community and as part of that dominance, the ideology will be naturalised, depoliticised and de-historicized (Eagleton, 1991; Schmidt, 2007). Influenced by the work of Simons & Ingram's (1997) concept of ideology, Armstrong (2010, p. 153) understands ideology as a guide to action and in relation to language he posits that there is a distinction "between language ideology on one hand and language use on the other".

2.4.3.2 Language ideology

> "Language is a fundamentally social phenomenon, and linguistic practices are not separate from the beliefs and attitudes relating to languages in societies. Nor are language ideologies always fixed or straightforward" (Creese and Blackridge, 2011, p. 1197).

Broadly speaking, 'language ideology' may be understood as a "cultural conceptions of language - its nature, structure, and use", and "what people think, or take for granted, about language and communication" (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994, pp. 55-56). Irvine & Gal (2000) also focus on linguistic beliefs being intimately linked with cultural identities and understandings, and with group and national politics, Gal (1989, p. 249) earlier having it defined as "the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests". For

Cameron (2003, p. 447), language ideologies represent “sets of representations through which language is imbued with cultural meaning for a certain community”.

Language ideologies have also been defined as “the totality of ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices, myths, religious structures, and all other cultural ‘baggage’ that speakers bring to their dealings with language from their culture” (Schiffman, 2006, p. 112) and “articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (Silverstein, 1979, p. 173). Often their language ideologies are unstated, often unconscious beliefs about language, often implicates politics and identities (Irvine & Gal, 2000). Linguistic anthropologist, Kroskrity emphasizes that it is “constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group” (2000, p. 8). His interpretation is that ideologies are “diverse beliefs about the superiority/inferiority of specific languages, about how languages are acquired, about language contact and multilingualism, about how languages are used in the social world” (Kroskrity, 2000, p. 8). Curdt-Christiansen (2009, p. 354) focuses “on the perceived value, power and utility of various languages” in her understanding of language ideology. Comments agree that language ideology involves “shared body of common beliefs, views and perceptions about language” but also include the importance of the “cultural assumptions about language” (Woolard, 1992). Armstrong (2012, p. 152) describes a language ideology as a “more-or-less coherent combination of these various elements that answer two simple questions - what is the value of a given language and how should that language be used?” And yet a simpler definition by Spolsky’s states that language ideology is “language policy with the manager left out, what people think should be done with language” (Spolsky, 2004, p. 14). Language ideology is a link between ability on the one hand and use on the other (Armstrong, 2012), and it therefore plays a central role in the success of language revitalization movements (Fishman, 1991, 2001).

By understanding individuals understanding of their own language and the place it has in their lives it enables researcher to make decisions on possible paths for future planning. “It is in the service of a language ideology that we

acquire a language, that we speak a language and that we pass it on to the next generation" (Armstrong, 2012, p. 146). Though ideology is a key to language vitality, the promotion of ideology as an aspect of language revitalisation remains relatively understudied. (Armstrong, 2012, p. 147). Armstrong (2012, p. 147) believes that;

> "to effectively support the use of threatened languages, we need to better understand how new language ideologies are advanced in language revitalization movements, particularly in organizations and at the micro level".

Language ideologies are formed and advanced "through the combination of particular discourses and registers, institutional structures and professional practices" (Sikandar, 2017, p. 351). Linguistic forms are indexical, indexing context through ideological inferences; a particular form stands for a particular social and cultural meaning (Silverstein, 2006, cited in Sikandar, 2017).

However, the correlation between language ideologies and language practices are not always straightforward, as ''their impact on everyday experience cannot easily be predicted'' (Rampton, 2006, p. 19). Indeed, ''the reality of people's circumstances is actively shaped by the ways in which they interpret and respond to them'' (Rampton, 2006, p. 19). A persons' actions, attitudes or linguistic practices are not only a reflection of the communities or societies into which speakers are born. Rampton (2006, p. 23), instead forwards the suggestion that ''here-and-now social action is seen as playing at least some part in the formation of potentially consequential solidarities and divisions''. In a school, as the one under investigation in this study, it exists in response to, and perhaps even despite, a strongly felt public discourse of monolingualism and homogeneity. At the same time, schools often appear to form a static, reified version of 'culture' and 'heritage', which may be remote from their students' experience (Blackledge & Creese, 2008). In this complex ideological context "schools become sites of subtle, nuanced negotiations of identities" (Creese and Blackridge, 2011).

Spolsky (2004), commenting on the success of language revitalisation efforts, suggests that, just as in the Hebrew case, ideology plays a crucial role in language revival. Commenting on the Maori language, Spolsky saw there were signs of the strength of ideology in the efforts to revitalise the endangered language, a language whose struggle resembles that of the Irish language. Ó Laoire (1996) in comparing how Hebrew was restored as the national language of Israel and the Irish language had failed acknowledged the role of Jewish motivation and Israeli nationalism, two components that were not, or perhaps only secondary, in the Irish restoration attempts.

2.4.3.3 Where language ideologies are formed

A multitude of influences and micro factors, consciously or subconsciously, determine the formation of language ideologies. Factors include the involvement of the home, school and wider community as well as other macro factors including political and socioeconomic influences (Leung & Uchikoshi, 2012, cited in Connaughton-Crean & Ó Duibhir, 2017, p. 23). While Fishman (1991, p. 95) describes the family as “the most common and inescapable basis of mother tongue transmission”, societal influences stemming from outside, or “macro-forces” need to be considered.

Cameron (2003, p. 448) forwards the notion that “language ideologies should be distinguished from beliefs and attitudes about language”. She posits the idea that while language ideologies are representations of language, they are social constructs, “ways of understanding the world that emerge from interaction with particular (public) representation of it” (Cameron 2003, p. 448). Language beliefs or attitudes on the other hand are constructed mentally and ‘belonging’ to individuals.

2.4.3.4 What linguistic ideologies exist

Ethnolinguistic nationalism views the nation as preordained and as part of the natural order naming language “a mythical and mystical unifier” espousing the notion that national consciousness is linked to language (Wright, 2000, p. 14). Eighteenth century models of nationalism, inspired by

Enlightment discourse, were less ridged with respect to the necessity for passion of a national language for nationhood. However, the nineteen century saw a change in the paradigm and the perverseness of what has been referred to above as 'ethnolinguistic nationalism' with "far more emphasis on the linking of nationhood with a national language" (Tymoczko & Ireland, 2003, pp. 4-5). In this paradigm:

> "a people must have more than a territory to claim nationhood: there must be a language, a distinct culture, and a national history as well. Language belonging to the social sphere and rooted in the depths of time —becomes a figure for the imagined community and its history projected into the past". (Anderson, 1991, pp. 144-45).

Wright (2000) referring to this 'mystic' association of language and people blends well with romanticism and the mood of this era. This strongly correlates with the phrase attributed to Pádraig Mac Piarais, '*Tír gan teanga tír gan anam'* (a country without a language is a country without a soul), or similarly with the Welsh phrase '*Cenedl heb iaith, cenedl heb galon'* (a nation without a language is a nation without a heart). This highlights an ideology prevalent at the time, an ideology now "realised to have being constructed historically and ideologically rather than as a natural fact" (Woolard, 1998, p. 16). A fellow revolutionary of Pádraig Mac Piarais, Eamon De Valera, former President of Ireland, reveals the same ideological stance. In response to a question asked by a 'New York Journal' reporter regarding his views on what would have profound effect on Irelands' progress during the years ahead he answered:

> "Restoring of Irish as the ordinary spoken language. The Irish language was the bond which effectively preserved us as a distinct nation through all the vicissitudes of the past and it is the best guarantee of preservation in the future" (Irish Press, 19 October 1957 cited in Ferriter, 2007, p. 305).

Universalism and republicanism which connected with Enlightenment and the French and American Revolutions challenged this notion as it was

evident in these cases that nations could be built even when “the population within a country became more linguistically diverse” (Wright, 2000, p. 35). Wright (2000, p. 16) argues that a “notion of a nation as defined by language, culture, history and religion appealed to what he terms the ‘proto-elites’ as a means of seeking independence from the empire and political freedom”.

The perennialists view nation and nationalism as a natural and biological phenomenon (Anbarani, 2013) and therefore, do not view a nation as predestined. Hence, language is viewed as something that can be acquired (Smith, 1995).

Modernism rejects the role of tradition in the building of nations and sees nation building as a new event and an “ethnicity and nationality as modern phenomenon which is produced by political elites. In the idea of Modernists, nations and nationalism is the product of modern state, bureaucracy, secularism and capitalism”. (Anbarani, 2013, p. 64). “Belonging to a nation is an ongoing process of construction and identification rather than an objective fact or a timeless loyalty to the land and people” (Nash, 2010, p. 79, cited in Anbarani, 2013, p. 64-65). The catalyst for establishing a nation state, according to Wright, (2000) is the move from totalitarianism to democracy.

Modernist linguistic ideology views linguistic unification as resulting from a need for development and progress. In the Irish context this could explain the promotion of English for social advancement by the national leader Daniel O’Connell, who was a fluent Irish speaker. He encouraged “the abandonment of Irish as English was perceived as necessary for social advancement”. (Tymoczko & Ireland, 2003, p. 5). To progress this notion the belief was, that the “community of communicators” (Wright, 2000, p. 23) was taught the standardized language, which was state supported and funded, the language that was essential for employment and commerce.

The post-modernist view of nationalism is that it is culturally constructed so that it can foster an imagined identity. In this view, language as both a “tool and the product of the creative process which constructs a nation”, is

accepted (Wright, 2000, p. 23). A nation in this view is “a community imagined by its constituent members and is constructed and accessed through the cultural artefacts, the symbols and the representations it produces” (Wright, 2000, p. 23).

The concept of Kulturnation describes an ideology of nationhood that unifies human community based on shared cultural rather than political statehood. Oergal (2006, p. 288) informs that culture supersedes the political concept of statehood thus it guides the goals of language, humanity, religion and traditions.

A common utterance heard in Irish is the “*cúpla focal*” (a couple of words) which indicates an attitude towards “emblematic” uses of Irish, that is, Irish words and/or formulaic chunks inserted in English speech. Although this ideology is a barrier to the “efficient language management in favour of Irish within public bodies” (Walsh, 2012, p. 337) and organisations “it can be argued that it is … an accurate reflection of the dominant national ideology in relation to Irish, as revealed by various surveys” (Walsh, 2012, p. 337). Irish is important, but only in a limited, passive and symbolic sense (Ó Riagáin & Ó Gliasáin, 1994; Mac Gréil & Rhatigan, 2009). However, the ideology of ‘the couple of words’ does not feature explicitly in the text of the Official Languages Act (2004).
According to Walsh (2012, p. 16) “it is an interesting example of how language policy, understood in Spolsky’s terms, reveals many internal contradictions and conflicts”. He suggests that this “ideological conflict could have negative consequences for Irish, by impeding the successful implementation of the government policy expressed in the legislation”. Policies described by Nic Giolla Mhichil *et al*., (2018, p. 869) as “quasi-hard policy instruments” which were not implemented sufficiently.

Language ideologies are closely tied to identity, for beliefs about language are also often beliefs about speakers (e.g., Silverstein, 1979) and linguistic structures become associated with social identities (e.g., Oche, 1993). “Ideology is the level at which practice enters the field of representation” writes Bucholtz & Hall (2004, p. 381). They expand by explaining that

“indexicality mediates between ideology and practice, producing the former through the latter. Performance is the highlighting of ideology through the foregrounding of practice”. (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, p. 381).

2.4.3.5 Identity

The term identity may be defined as “the active negotiation of an individual’s relationship with larger social constructs” (Mendoza-Denton, 2002, p. 475). “Identity inheres in actions, not in people” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, p. 376). As the product of situated social action, identities may shift and recombine to meet new circumstances. This perspective is in total contrast to the traditional view of identities as unitary and enduring psychological states or social categories (Bucholtz & Hall,, 2004, p. 376). Johnstone (2008, p. 151) believes that “identity refers to the outcome of processes by which people index their similarities to and differences from others, sometimes self-consciously and strategically and sometimes as a matter of habit”. Amongst others, the classification of identity includes national, ethnic, racial, class and rank, professional and gender identities. Linguistic identities are linguistically constructed by the choice of a language or dialect (e.g. vernacular vs. standard), use of linguistic forms (e.g. phonological, lexical, etc.) and communicative practices (e.g. greetings) (Kroskity, 2000).

Castells (2000, p. 3) points to the major role of identity in the world of today, claiming that “…[i]n a world of global flows of wealth, power, and images, the search for identity, collective or individual, ascribed or constructed, becomes the fundamental source of social meaning”. While some researchers question the validity and the explanatory potential of this concept altogether, other scholars differ in their views on what social identity stands for (Malešević, 2011; 2006; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Jenkins, 2008; 2006). Most approaches conceptualise identity in either strong or weak sense. The tendency among scholars who analyse identity in strong terms is either to see identity as the collective expression of group sameness or view it in opposition to the utilitarian forms of social action where identity is directly counterpoised to one’s self-interest (Malešević, 2013). The approaches that

utilise a weaker sense of the concept range from the individualist positions that understand identities through the prism of the unsettled, variable and fragmented modes of selfhood towards those who analyse identities as process-oriented, interactive and contingent forms of social action (Jenkins, 2008; Malešević, 2003; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Martin, 1995).

2.4.3.6 Language identity

Identity is an entity, which is at the core of language and to identity with a language is explained by a variety of studies. Tovey *et al.*, (1988, p. 33), when discussing Irish, state that "language was a source of pride". "Language as a source of solidarity" was forwarded by Tsunoda (2006, pp. 141-2). "Language as a source of human knowledge" forwarded by Crystal (2000, pp. 44-45) argues that identity and history are combined to ensure that each language reflects a unique interpretation or vision of human existence as discussed earlier in the chapter. Crystal (2000) further claims that one story does not account for a world view as a world view gradually emerges through the accumulation of many sources from a community. But Crystal (2000, pp. 46-47) also comments that it is language that;

> "unifies everything, linking environmental practice with cultural knowledge, and transmitting everything synchronically among the members of a community, as well as diachronically between generations".

A language must have some value to its speakers. How a language is valued, especially threatened like lesser-used languages, is often found in its connection to speakers' identity (Scollon & Scollon, 1981). Spolsky (1999, p. 181) describes it as "a powerful symbol of national and ethnic identity", while Crystal claimed that language was indeed the primary symbol of identity (Crystal 2000). Where there has been a marked increase in the promotion and use of a minority language, the revival of Irish in Belfast (Maguire, 1991) and of Welsh in Wales (Jones, 1998), studies have revealed that "one of the underlining motivations behind the movements is concerned with identity" (Tsunoda, 2006, p. 140).

Schecter (2015) provides a detailed account of how the relationship between language, identity and culture has been studied. She suggests the research on this relationship has passed through three phases, components that are linked and rooted in one's ethnicity. In this view the loss of language also means the loss of a culture (Fishman, 1991). The three components are perceived as innate, fixed characteristics that one is born with. According to this way of thinking, one possesses an identity which cannot be changed. In recent times, this essentialist view of language, identity and culture is promoted. It suggests that characteristics are inherent and cannot be acquired which is not true in the case of language acquisition. This is particularly poignant in relation to the Irish language at present, where, the traditional intergenerational transmission in the home which was predominately in the pockets of Irish speaking areas along the Western seaboard but now more Irish is being spoken outside of the *Gaeltacht* areas.

The second phase, the "sociocultural perspective" (Schecter, 2015, p. 198) takes into consideration the complexity of the relationship between language, culture and identity and views them as multidimensional. Inherent in this phase is criticisms of the earlier essentialized perceptions of identity have led to current thinking positioning identity as a dynamic social construct. Identity is viewed as a process that can be "performed rather than possessed" (Joseph, 2009, p. 14). This involves "a detailed assessment of how people ascribe and inhabit identity through a range of identity features" (Blommaert, 2005, p. 210). This indicates that individuals can perform many different identities rather than possess just one, enabling them to participate in various communities of practice. "It is such communities of practice that shape individuals, provide them with their identities, and often circumscribe what they can do" (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015, p. 69). This means that "identities are about becoming rather than simply being" (Hall, 1996, p. 4). Identities, Hall explains, are being built upon historical, cultural and linguistic resources, which evolve over time.

Commenting on the function of language Warschauer & De Florio-Hansen (2003, p. 4) state that

> “In the current era, language signifies historical and social boundaries that are less arbitrary than territory and more discriminating (but less exclusive) than race or ethnicity... Language-as-identity also intersects well with the nature of subjectivity in today’s world. Identity in the postmodern era has been found to be multiple, dynamic, and conflictual, based not on a permanent sense of self but rather on the choices that individuals make in different circumstances over time”.

Language can “become markers of different ethnic groups and different nations” (Barbour, 2000, p. 10). Therefore, a language is not only a means of communication, but a language is also a means of articulating and performing an identity (Blommaert, 2005). Moreover, “identities may serve as a point of identification and unity; in this same way they may also reinforce differences and therefore, identities can both include and exclude” (Hall, 1996, p. 5).

Whilst this view of identity has since been replaced by dynamic and fluid conception of identity (Blommaert, 2005, p. 210), certain aspects of this early view, such as the perceived importance of “place and language remain influential in current identity debates” (Freeland & Patrick, 2004, p. 5). Equally, Smith (2014, p. 4) states that in recent years scholars have come to agree that rather than representing two opposing views of identity, ethnic and civic models are interconnected.

Current scholars position identities as multiple and dynamic; certain characteristics, such as language and territory remain influential in the construction and perception of identity (Blackledge, 2008; Joseph, 2009). In the Irish context it is evident that early territorialised views of nationalism as well as dynamic conceptions continue to influence language beliefs, and therefore, contribute to the language policy of a community. But beliefs towards language and identity are complex and no more so than in a local language policy.

Regarding language learners, identity can play different roles which impact on whether individuals are;

> “motivated or unmotivated, introverted or extroverted, inhibited or uninhibited, without considering that such affective factors are frequently socially constructed in inequitable relations of power, changing across time and space, and possibly coexisting in contradictory ways within a single individual” (Norton, 2013, p. 3).

A change of one’s identity can create, what most theorists of second language acquisition call an imagined community and imagined identities (a term coined by Anderson (1991). In the case of the Irish language where there is little opportunity to use the language, an imagined community and imagined identity which “temporarily shape and reconstruct previous communities … offer possibilities for an enhanced range of identity options in the future” (Norton, 2013, p. 3).

2.5 The situation regarding the Irish language.

The value of Irish was viewed as an integral part of an Irish person identity and Ireland’s identity in research on the topic. However, as discussed earlier there is a disparity between what they view as being an important part of being Irish and using the language in their lives. For people to communicate purposefully there must be a wide acceptance of an “intrinsic link between language and identity” (May, 2000, p. 366). But evidently, the symbolic role of the language, as witnessed in the Irish case, does not depend on use. A language may become a cultural symbol even for people who do not speak it, as is the case of the Irish language in Ireland (Ó Riagáin, 1997; Mac Giolla Chriost, 2012). O’Reilly reflects that “whatever the eventual fate of Irish as a living language will continues to influence Irish identity in both Northern Ireland and the Republic” (2003, p. 17). The Welsh language in Wales (Livingstone *et al.,* 2011) and Gaelic in Scotland (MacDonald, 1999), both minority languages, are experiencing the same symbolic roles where the language is more of a cultural symbol rather than a fully functional language. Northover and Donnelly (1996), in their discussion on language revival and on the relationship between ethnic identity and the use of language, observed that, despite the economic, social, and political forces that brought

about the shift from Irish to English, Irish enjoys high status as a cultural symbol. They ascertain that ethnic group members, however, do not see themselves as less Irish if they do not speak or use the language. In a survey of Irish young people Moffatt (2011) discovered that the young people can actively engage with the notion of a changing Irish identity and the Irish language can be seen, for some, to act as an anchoring of identity by being a defence that underlines and distinguishes Irish identity. Irish people evidently give widespread support for the Irish language but there is “an unwillingness to translate this support into deeds” by learning and/or using the language as a means of communication (Peillon, 1982, p. 102).

Irving & Gal (2009, p. 404) focus on identity formation states that “identity depends on one defining ‘the self’ in relation to an imagined ‘Other’”. They see linguistic behaviour originating from the essence of the person instead of historical factors and in relation to minority languages this “identity formation may be …. through the promotion of nationalist language ideologies” (Horner, 2007, p. 135).

2.5.1 Nationalist language ideologies in the Irish context

Tymoczko & Ireland (2003, pp. 9-10) forwarded a more optimistic analysis: the Irish literature revival movement encouraged works based on Irish culture forwarding a “constructivist approach to language and representation”, claiming that the language movement allowed for “new representations of Irishness as ‘noble and heroic’ as opposed to the negative stereotyped models which persisted through the nineteenth century”. The same authors also refer to ‘cultural confidence ‘observed at the end of the twentieth century in Ireland which they attribute in part to the Irish language (2003, p. 14). Yet, only 14.5 % of Irish respondents felt that the ability to speak Irish was very important in order to be considered truly Irish (Davis, 2003, cited in White, 2006, p. 221). A Europe-wide survey of languages found that 14% of Irish people described Irish as their native language – this was low in comparison with statistics for other nations when describing their native language (Eurobarometer, 2001, p. Section 1.1). According to Walsh (2012, p. 13) “this ideology is dominant but implicit in the schemes and

exercises a strong influence on language governance both internally and externally". Ó hIfearnáin writes that "… the state has now hatched a new understanding that Irish speakers are a cultural and linguistic minority, while the majority must still be able to learn the language as it is part of their heritage and carries sentimental value" (Ó hIfearnáin, 2000, p. 109).

2.5.2 Future and difficulties of adapting to new ideological

Changing language practices can be difficult as Coupland (2007, p. 90) remarks that the concept of habitus indicates the difficulty for speakers of removing themselves from "the ideological association of [their] own ingrained ways of speaking". These are derived from the process of being socialised into ways of speaking which are acceptable for their particular social group. Where organisations operate under an ideology similar to the dominant ideology in society, they can largely ignore the ideology of their members, being confident that most new members will come to the organisation instilled with an organisational ideology and therefore there will be no need to manage that ideology (Simons & Ingram, 1997). This is the case in English-medium schools and as a result it is recognised that "it is quite hard to establish and maintain a language ideology among their members" that would lead to a broader use of the Irish language (Armstrong, 2011, p. 153).

2.6 Language policy and planning debate

There has been much debate regarding the terms 'language policy' and 'language planning' about which is supposed to lead to which or whether they are distinguishable concepts (Hornberger, 2006; Grin, 20003; Spolsky, 2004). For Ricento (2000, p. 209) language planning is;

> "a subordinate category to language policy, which is concerned not only with official and unofficial acts of governmental and other institutional entities but also with the historical and cultural processes that have institutional entities, influenced, and continue to influence, societal

attitudes and practices with regard to language use, acquisition and status".

As a result of the confluences of the terms 'language planning' and 'language policy' the term 'language policy and planning' emerged (Hornberger, 2006). This was seen to extend the scope of the traditional interrelated 'language planning branches' (for example, corpus, status, prestige and acquisition planning) to language policy. As a result, it can be claimed that 'language policy and planning' covers four dimensions or, (inspired by Baldauf, 2004 and Lo Bianco, 2013a) four sorts of interrelated 'activities' or 'actions' (Darquennes & Vandenbussche, 2015). These four actions aim at:

(a) Standardising and/or elaboration the lexicon, grammar and/or orthography of the minority language (by modifying the corpus of a language) which the Irish language has been successful in doing as a result of the state funded endeavours.
(b) Influencing the societal status and/or the functional range of a given language without aiming at increasing the number of people using it which appears to be the ongoing aim of the state funded initiatives (see Government of Ireland, 2010);
(c) Acts that raise the social prestige of a language or a language's 'reputation' (Lo Bianco, 2013b, p. 3100) which can be observed in the case of Irish in the introduction and implementation of the Language Act 2004 and
(d) Promoting the acquisition of a language and as a result increase the number of users of the Irish language. Irish is a compulsory subject on the curriculum for primary and post-primary students.

For the purposes of this study, "language policy refers to the general linguistic aims identified by social institutions (including governments)" (Walsh & McLeod, 2008, p. 22) which involve the whole body of oral/or written (formal or informal texts), that aim at affirming or reaffirming or changing the language dynamics in a part of society. 'Language planning', on the other hand, refers to specific interventionist measures undertaken to

achieve or implement such aims (Walsh, 2006). However, despite the lack of conceptual clarity in literature Walsh & McLeod (2008, p. 22) state that “it is reasonable to conclude that in most cases the desired outcome is the same: some sort of change to an existing sociolinguistic situation”.

2.6.1 Language Policy

Ideological clarification is deemed to play an important role in the success of language revitalization as a social movement (Fishman, 1991, 2001; Dauenhauer *et al.*, 1998; Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer, 1998). This ideological clarification is evident in the Irish population where the population advocate an “ideological clarification” supporting language renewal. Yet, there is little or no such clarification occurring on the ground. Similar observations were made by Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer (1998) in their study of language in South-eastern Alaska. Hence, the extent of the circulation of a language ideology becomes of interest in the formulation of policies for its revitalisation in practical use in a school. However, various questions need answering in relation to forming policy in an organisation such as a school. Spolsky (2004) poses the questions how exactly is an appropriate ideology for language revitalization clarified in an organization or in a community? What is best practice when it comes to planning language ideology at the micro level?

One can understand language policy to be the whole body of oral and/or written (in)formal texts that aim at (re)affirming or changing the language dynamics in (a part or different parts of) society (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997, p. ix; Ricento, 2000; Schiffman, 2013). However, language policy can also be based on a reconsideration of already existing or newly implemented language planning measures.

Whether explicitly or implicitly stated, language policy reflects the ideological views and orientations of a society, government, institutions or individual (Armstrong, 2011). People create and enact language policy at all levels of

society; from the home to communities, businesses, local government, the state and on up to include super-state polities (Spolsky, 2004). Language policy is often seen as a macro level activity and the province of governments and perhaps businesses – an example being the Irish governmental attempt to effect change in the language use of its citizens through top-down policy and planning (Ó Croideáin, 2006; Ó Laoire, 2005; Walsh & McLeod, 2008).

2.6.1.1 Overt and Covert policy

This comprehensive view of language policy aligns with Schiffman's work (1999). He forwards that a community's language policy comprises overt *de jure* and covert *de facto* policies, explaining that overt policies are created and implemented by authorities, whereas covert policies are a communities' sociolinguistic practices– both which contribute to its language policy. Some linguistic communities can have an explicit written language management document; however, in others such "a document may not exist, or it may represent a false front, concealing the real language policy" (Schiffman, 1996, p. 6). As a result, proposals by those in authority may not necessarily support explicit policy, and the existing proposals do not necessarily assure their implementation or the fulfilment of the intended objectives (Spolsky, 2004; Shohamy, 2006). In fact, "official texts may be ignored in favour of dominant language ideologies" (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007, p. 517). Instead, additional factors, such as internalised ideologies, or extra linguistic circumstances, for example, financial or political motivations, may act as obstacles to implementing a stated language policy. Due to this, Shohamy (2006, p. 50) recommends looking beyond written legislation documents and suggests that to understand fully a community's language policy it is necessary to look at the range of language mechanisms, both overt and covert, which may be manipulated to influence language policy.
Ruíz (1984) proposes three ideological orientations to language: language as a problem, language as a right, and language as a resource. All policies will have tendencies towards one or more orientations, and "highlighting these tendencies raises awareness about what kind of policy development is

needed in order to establish or maintain equity" (Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 31).

2.6.1.2 Micro/Marco – Bottom-up/Top-down.

The direction of the planned change, whether starting at grassroots level or whether instigated at governmental level is referred to in the literature as "bottom-up" and "top-down". Actors in "top down" tend to possess significant power enabling them to bring about change more easily in comparison to the "bottom-up" actor who has considerably less power. Aligning "top-down" with macro planning gives a more complex operation and there is often the work of institutions behind it. The "bottom-up", understood to be the micro planning, is often the work of individuals (Nekvapil & Sherman, 2015). Nekvapil & Sherman (2015, p. 2) recognises that the relationship between these two sets of concepts, the interplay of bottom-up and top-down strategies, "are among the greatest challenges in researching empirical reality". Shohamy (2006) values the role of the micro-level and bottom-up language planning, claiming these initiatives are the democratic processes in the formation of language policy – a micro-language policy. Macro planning at the status planning stage might legislate that "all civil servants in national and local government bodies must be fluent in Irish to accommodate citizens who wish to conduct their business with those governments in Irish" (Blake, 1998, p. 2).

Fishman (1991) believes that it is possible to reverse language shift and that there is a place in society for minority languages. He asserts that companies, groups and individuals can have an impact on the language situation. However, while macro national language planning schemes have dominated the language planning literature, the micro situation have been ignored and much less is known about the participants and how the individual make decisions in such situations (Kaplin & Baldauf, 1997). The revival of a language may be seen not simply as a case of language planning, but of micro language planning, in which the potential speakers constitute micro-language planning agents (Nahir, 1998). In Armstrong's study (2011) of three distinct communities in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and

Scotland, he illustrates a way of thinking about planning language ideology in small organizations/groups involved in language revitalization. Advocating the micro planning aspect of threatened languages, he concludes that language activists, educators and policy makers will be more successful in promoting the use of a threatened language “if they self-consciously plan the language ideology of their organization” (Armstrong, 2011, p. 147).

Again, the revival of Hebrew, discussed earlier, may also have been due to micro language planning, "in which the potential speakers, highly motivated, constituted "teams" of non-centralized, individual "micro-language planning agents" operating in "language planning cells"" (Nahir, 1998, p. 353).

In the Irish context, Irish Language Revival has met with mixed success, and it has been suggested that a more bottom-up approach might be more effective (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2006). Other authors, on language revival, also agree that micro level policy is more common, and more important, that may have been originally assumed (Baldauf, 1994, 2006; Curdt-Christiansen, 2009; King *et al*., 2008). Armstrong theoretically building on the work of Paul Ingram and Tal Simons and others, recognises that language ideology circulates at the micro level, highlighting the role of organisations, such as a school, have "in mediating social change by advancing ideology” (Armstrong, 2011, p. 147) and recognises the role they have in “reversing language shift as a cellular, bottom-up social movement”. (Armstrong, 2011, p. 147).

2.6.2 Language planning

Language planning can be viewed as an attempt to influence the language dynamics, in parts of, or different parts of society by means of concrete measures that address the corpus, the status (Haugen, 1959, 1987; Kloss, 1969), the acquisition (Cooper, 1989) and/or the prestige (Haarman, 1990) of a single or more language varieties. It refers “to deliberate efforts to influence the behaviour of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes” (Cooper, 1989, p. 45). It is a

practice that can be either undertaken with formal, official governmental sanctions, or could be reflected in unofficial and informal practices.

Language planning is not a neutral or simple problem-solving activity:

> "… (it) is typically carried out for the attainment of non-linguistic ends such as consumer protection, scientific exchange, national integration, political control, economic development, the creation of new elites or the maintenance of old ones, the pacification or co-option of minority groups, and mass mobilization of national or political movements" (Cooper 1996, p. 35).

There are always ideological assumptions and political imperatives which underpin language planning activities this acknowledges the broader processes of a historical and cultural nature, involving non-governmental players too, e.g. pressure groups, researchers, journalists, charismatic leaders (with or without the legitimacy of the state).

Of the two basic types of planning "corpus planning and status planning the former has achieved more observable success" (Blake, 1998, p. 148). Status planning refers "to establishing programs to enhance the use and the prestige of a language among its speakers and among speakers of other languages" (Blake, 1998, p. 148). First forwarded by Haugen (1959, p. 8) language planning was explained as an activity of preparing a normative orthography, grammar, and dictionary for the guidance of writers and speakers in a non-homogenous speech community. Later Kloss (1969) added two foci of language planning: corpus planning (including Haugen's language planning activities) and status planning – "government recognition of one language in relation to others government recognition of one language in relation to others" (Cooper, 1996, p. 32), e.g. the relations between a national language and regional or minority languages. Fishman (1979) viewed both as being linked aspects of language planning. He states that "corpus planning without status planning is linguistic game, a technical exercise without social consequences (Fishman, 1979, p. 12). Corpus

planning, according to Mesthrie *et al.* (2009), is involved with the internal structure of a language, dealing with;

> "norm selection and codification, as in the writing of grammars and the standardization of spelling; status planning deals with initial choice of language, including attitudes toward alternative languages and the political implications of various choices." (Bright, 1992, p. 311).

Husna (2018, p. 55) claims it explains "how forms in that language are functioned when it serves as an official language".

Status planning on the other hand refers to the attempts to shift a position of a language with regards to other languages in political and social context (Mesthrie *et al.*, 2009). It is a more deliberate action to change the function and status of a language for a reason or purpose (Husna, 2018).

According to Liddicoat and Baldauf (2008) "language planning embraces 'language-in-education (or acquisition) planning (about learning), and (most recently) prestige planning (about image)" (cited in Husna, 2018, p. 55).

Cooper (1996, p. 33) claims that 'acquisition planning' has, as its aim "to increase the number of users – speakers, writers, listeners, or readers". Cooper, commenting on 'language acquisition planning' (Cooper, 1996 [1989) views it as important in the education sector. He defines language planning as a "*deliberate* efforts to influence the behaviour of others with respect to the *acquisition*, *structure* or *functional allocation* of their language codes" (1996, p. 45, his italics). The distinction may appear clear cut in theory, but Cooper admits that this "might not be the case in practice" (1996, p. 32). Choosing which languages will be used as medium of instruction, for example, is important in acquisition planning as students must not only learn the language but use it to learn. However, an in-depth study of langauge acquisition planning and motivation remains outside the remit of this study yet a natural progression for this study may be to follow with a future study, equipped with the data from this research, with acquisition planning for the organisation as its focus.

2.6.2.1 Classification and model of language planning.

Rabin's language planning classification aims to distinguish between three different categories. Firstly, linguistic aims, dealing with the "cultivation of the corpus by linguistics towards achieving greater precision, clarity, efficiency in the language" (Aktuna, 2012, p. 17). Secondly, semi-linguistic aims "involve making changes in the writing systems, spelling, orthography etc." which is frequently carried out (Aktuna, 2012, p. 17). Finally, extra-linguistic aims which are "primarily political in nature and involve both horizontal and vertical language spread, creation of a new language, revival of an unused one, or suppression of existing languages for socio-political reasons" (Aktuna, 2012, p. 17). Rabin (1971, p. 277) states that extra-linguistic aims "involves language spread through educational planning"

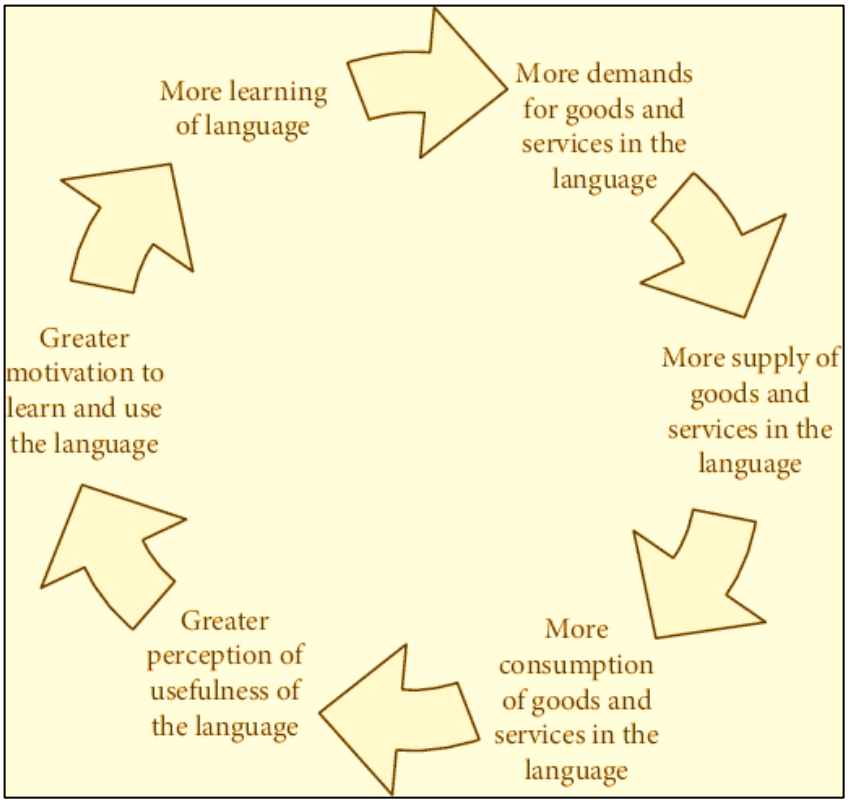
A model of interest regarding language planning is that of 'The Catherine Wheel' – which has "been developed in three versions by Miquel Strubell: the individual as consumer (Strubell, 1996, 2001), the individual as worker (Strubell, 1999) and the individual as a social being (Strubell, 1999, cited in Earls, 2013, p. 127). Catalan, a minority language with similar problems to the Irish language was the focus of Stub ell's study where he claims there is a link between;

> "competence in a language, its social use, the presence and demand for products and services in/ through the language, and motivation to use and learn it, which in turn enhances competence in the form of a wheel" (Stubell, 1996, p. 6).

Recognising the obstacles that exist between each of the stages in the model Strubell calls for language planners "to identity strategic interventions in order to overcome them" (2001, p. 280). The Catherine Wheel views the individual as the centre of any process of democratic social change. The individual is the consumer and any one of the six steps above may be subject to "blockage and it is the task of the language planner is to overcome the causes of blockage with specific measures where they are required"

(Fishman, 2001, p. 280). Of course, language planners cannot do this on their own and required the overt or covert actions of the individual.

Figure 2. 3 The Catherine Wheel



Source: (Strubell, 2005 cited in Milligan, Chalmers and O'Donnell, 2013, p. 131).

In the case of Ireland Strubell's theory would hold that greater supply of public services in Irish leads to greater consumption of such services, leading to greater perception of the need for Irish or of their utility, leading to a greater need to learn and use the language if so wished. By broadening the use of the Irish language outside of the classroom this model could be adopted to suit an educational establishment. Of course, the model does not consider problems of intrinsic motivation to use minority languages in unfamiliar contexts. In relation to this study it highlights the importance of a well- planned intervention with incremental steps with the findings of this thesis being used as a first step. This is a crucial issue, particularly when the overwhelming majority of speakers are bilinguals, as is the case with Irish,

so that making more opportunities to use the Irish language available to them will not necessary lead speakers to perceive a ‘greater need’ to use the Irish language. Established linguistic practices and community beliefs concerning language may remain in place (Ó hIfearnáin, 2006), and the fundamental issue of intrinsic motivation to use (and to learn) the language—which will tend to involve aspects of identity and ideology retains its importance (Ager, 2001). To this extent, Strubell’s suggestion (2001, p. 280) that ‘specific measures’ are needed to make sure the Catherine Wheel is turning properly arguably avoids the problem of motivation. Nevertheless, the Catherine Wheel model is useful to analyse the links between service provision of the language and language revitalisation.

Ozolins (2013) notes that since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been an observable shift away from the use of the term “language planning” and toward the use of the term “language management” and therefore a brief overview of language management is discussed below.

2.6.3 Language Management

Language management has been comprehensively defined as:

> “a process through which particular people are given the authority to find and suggest systematic and rigorous solutions to problems of language potentially or actually encountered by members of their community. Note that this formulation does not presuppose a democratic or any other particular institutional process of authorization; but it does require identification of the language problem in discourse. Such identification should be rigorous and extensive” (Jernudd, 1991, p. 134).

Spolsky (2004, p. 8) views it simply as “an individual or a group making direct efforts to manipulate a language situation” later adding a broader definition as he believed the latter definition was restricted to official declarations of language use and was originally called ‘language policy’.

Language management, or efforts to control language practices or beliefs, are not usually carried out for linguistic or communicative purposes alone.

Shohamy (2006), echoing the views of Bourdieu (1991), believes that language is not simply a means of communication but also a medium which can be manipulated to express one's own interest and reinforce power relations. Hence, Shomany (2006, p. 46) asserts that language can be manipulated for political, economic or social gains. Language is not only a means of transmitting information: it also expresses and reproduces social hierarchies. However, efforts may not be linguistically motivated (Ricento & Hornberger, 1999).

Spolsky (2009) provides examples of how language management can be implemented on various levels, for example within the home, work or educational environment. Implicit in this view is that to achieve "a detailed understanding of language policy, a holistic view of language management must be adopted since efforts to manipulate linguistic behaviour can move in both directions" (Cooper, 1989, p. 38). Terminology defining what people do with language can lead to confusion in the literature on the topic. For example, what roles do language policy and language planning have in dialogue pertaining to language management?

2.7 The importance of the communicative role

To create language policy, "linguistic phenomena like grammar and syntax cannot be separated from 'speech behaviour' meaning the actual use of the language in social contexts or 'domains'" (Jan Wirrer, cited in Blake, 1998, p. 150). They are inevitably interdependent and factors such as numbers of speakers, the economy of the country and even religion have a baring in what Blake coins "the external setting" (Blake, 1998, p. 150). Those three phenomena for example are important in the formation of language policy, language planning and in its implementation.

Language planners seem to concur that a critical element for achieving language planning goals is the communicative needs of a community (Haugen, 1966 [1972], 1966; Rubin *et al*., 1971; Nahir, 1984; Paulston, 1988). All attempts at language revival, except that of Hebrew, have failed probably because, for historical reasons, the communicative needs of a

community were not at work (Nahir, 1998; Cormack, 2000). Ó Laoire & Harris (2006, p. 12) believe that “links with the speech community are crucial”.

Following several decades of language planning and policy, the Irish government has failed to make the minority language one of habitual use in society at large (Moriarty, 2010, p. 143; Cormack, 2000). Most of the population in the Irish Republic have only limited, if any capacity in Irish and those who class themselves as speakers of these languages are almost always bilingual (see CSO, 2017). According to the 2016 census 39.8% of the Irish population claim some level of knowledge of Irish. The low level of Irish usage may be at least due to the absence of Irish in social domains (Moriarty, 2010).

Attempts to revive Irish have been unsuccessful largely because English was in general use by the time the revival was attempted (MacNamara, 1971; Reaves & Wright, 1996). In Irish, as in other attempts at language revival (e.g. Welsh, Cornish, Frisian, or Maori), the realistic goal was survival as a second language as highlighted by Winter (1993). For language revival to take place in a community there needs to be “some unique social, cultural, political, economic, or other force intensely at work, a communicative vacuum…” (Nahir, 1998, p. 340). Hindley (1990) and Carnie (1995) judge the almost complete failure to revive Irish to several points. The overwhelming force of English as a tool for economic liberation, to the poor methods of teaching Irish and to the lack of a connection between teaching of Irish in schools and encouraging its use as home.

2.8 Minority Language Revival

As a part of language policy and planning, various models have been proposed to analyse the decline and resurgence of minority languages (see, e.g. Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Ricento, 2006). Cooper’s familiar tripartite division of status, corpus and acquisition planning (1989) has since been modified and elaborated by several authors, some of whom have focused on

interventions aimed at strengthening the position of minority languages, for instance, ‘reversing language shift’ (RLS) (Fishman 1991, 2000).

However, models such as RLS, which are based on concepts such as diglossia (a situation in which two languages are used under different conditions within a community, often by the same speakers) and intergenerational transmission, have been rejected by some sociolinguists as inappropriate for analysing the position of many smaller minority languages (Romaine, 2006). It was rejected in this thesis as it is evident that English is the first language and Irish is rarely heard outside of the Irish language classroom. Indeed, Ireland and the situation of the Irish language, does not constitute a good example of diglossia as the relative proportion of balanced bilinguals is small and “[b]oth languages occur over the full range of social domains, though the use of Irish in many of them is ... minimal” (Ó Murchú, 1988, p. 248).

Romaine (2006, p. 464) distinguishes between RLS and language revitalisation, defining the latter as “not necessarily attempting to bring the language back to former patterns of familiar use, but rather to bring the language forward to new users and uses”. She suggests, therefore, that “in some circumstances ‘secondary agencies of transmission’, such as schools may be more capable of producing competent bilinguals than the bilingual community is able to reproduce by itself” (Romaine, 2006, p. 466). This draws attention to the importance of the education system in equipping speakers of minority languages to use their languages in relation to public services and the linguistic challenges that might present (Ó Laoire & Harris, 2006).

King (2001), while acknowledging that language revitalisation is best conceptualised as a type of societal level language shift, involving macro societal-level cultural and socioeconomic processes, also acknowledges that “micro-interactional factors of language acquisition” are often overlooked (King, 2001, p. 3). An attempt at reviving a minority language crucially involves restoring its vitality (Spolsky, 1998) and while authorities often impose language management measures, the micro-managed, grassroots

level offers efforts to influence a language situation (Spolsky, 2004). Cooper (1989, p. 38) acknowledges the role of both macro and micro planning in language policy formation claiming that, a holistic view of language management must be adopted since efforts to manipulate linguistic behaviour can move in both directions. However, he acknowledges the role of local language planners' efforts and states that by "excluding local language planning efforts from an analysis of language policy would 'impoverish the field' " (Copper, 1989, p. 38) since it would not allow a complete understanding of a community's sociolinguistic setting. Fishman (1991) and Stround (2001) both emphasise the importance of grassroots involvement in their theoretical approaches to bringing about sociolinguistic change.

The transformation of the dynamics of the Irish language in both Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland acknowledges the dominance of a macro-level approach (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2006). It is observed that the failure of this approach is reflected in the eventual circularity of policy – characterised by some as a process of institutionalisation, de-institutionalisation, and re- institutionalisation (Ó Riagáin, 1988)

While at the level of status planning the Irish languages enjoy official recognition, as per the Constitution of 1937, the actual reality at grassroots level is different. Blake (1998), even though writing twenty years ago in an article entitled 'Irish Language Today', observed the revitalisation of the Irish language has "failed largely because it has ignored the human who speaks, or might speak the language and in contrast has concentrated on the language as a reified artefact" (Blake, 1998, p. 148).

From a language planning perspective much effort has been devoted to reversing Irish language shift, to try to stop the decline of the language and to promote its knowledge and use, a task made difficult by the fact that Irish as a minority languages co-exists in a linguistic community where the majority language is also a major world language (Moriarty, 2010). At the level of corpus planning, a standardised version of Irish has been developed to bridge dialectal gaps, namely '*An Caighdeán Oifigiúil'* [The Official

Standard]. This version has become the varieties taught in schools. Indeed, it is at the level of acquisition planning that most effort has been made to revive Irish. The Irish language has been a compulsory part of the Irish curriculum since 1922 at both primary and post-primary level. In recent times Irish-medium schools, known as *Gaelscoileanna*, have seen a dramatic increase in attendance, although this increase may be more closely related to the elite nature of the schools due to a lower than average student-to-teacher ratio (Coady, 2001; McWilliams, 2006, cited in Ó Laoire, 2005). At one level this is true: language activism, like any social activism, is most effective when it is savvy and carefully pitched. (Armstrong, 2012, p. 161). Our behaviour is not only a matter of free choice alone (Bourdieu, 1989; Clayton, 2008; cited in Armstrong, 2012, p. 161) and in particular the choices we make about language use are circumscribed by language norms in the over-all context of the dominant language ideologies in our societies (Armstrong, 2011). It is "a common truism among language activists that you cannot force someone to speak a language" (Armstrong, 2012, p. 161).

Commenting on the Welsh language, a minority language similar to the Irish situation, Thomas (2010) forwards a 'savvy approach' entitled Nudge Theory. Nudge Theory has been difficult to define and has been criticised for its "operational fuzziness" (Marteau *et al.,* 2011). Thaler & Sunstein (2008, p. 6) define Nudge Theory as "any aspect of choice architecture that alters people's behaviour in a predictable way without removing any options or significantly changing their economic incentives". Thomas (2010), discussing the Welsh language, states that the right to use Welsh and, increasing the use of Welsh do not always go hand-in-hand. He questions the success of language revival "unless detailed attention is given to how the majority of Welsh speakers can be "nudged" into taking advantage of the resultant opportunities [to use the language]. As well as rights, a nudge is necessary" (Thomas, 2012, p. 21; cited in Keegan and Evas, 2012). "Nudges" are best described as a manner of social control, unlike bans or mandates that are "liberty-preserving approaches that steer people in particular directions, but that also allow them to go their own way" (Sunstein, 2014, p. 1; cited in Brinkmann, 2017).

Acknowledging the necessity to promote a minority or lesser used language it must be considered in language management that not everyone will agree with the measures (or agree to follow them). There will be “even those who will oppose language revival efforts” (Fishman, 1991, p. 11). Their motivations must be ascertained for effective language management measures to be devised. Thus, in order to understand a speech community’s actual language policy, various language management measures in place must be considered. The focus should be on how the measures “may result in, and be the result of, a complex web of language beliefs and practices, which interact at various levels” (Burgess, 2017, p. 30).

2.8.1 Minority languages and the education system.

Ferguson (2006, p. 34), discussing the function of language education in language planning contexts, distinguishes between acquisition policy and language planning in education. Language planning in education involves addressing the following significant policy issues:

1. “The choice of medium of instruction for the various levels of the education system-primary, secondary and tertiary.
2. The role and function of the home language in education.
3. The choice of other languages as curricular subjects of instructions.
4. Decisions on when languages are introduced into the curriculum.
5. Decisions on whether languages are to be made compulsory for whom and for how long.
6. What varieties of a particular language will serve as a model or norm for teaching purposes” (Ó Laoire and Harris, 2006, p. 8)

2.8.1.1 The role of the schools

Schools have been viewed as critical contexts for language loss and language maintenances and revitalisation (Ó Laoire, 2005). McCarthy (1997), argues that schools must adopt a prominent position in language revitalisation and maintenance efforts since schools have had destructive effects on indigenous languages in the past. Indeed “schools as well as pre-

schools have shown themselves to be critical contexts for both language loss and revitalisation" (Huss *et al*., 2003, p. 4). However, Huss maintains that without a school system in which the minority language has its proper place, all other revival efforts are likely to falter. Education is often state funded and "controlled by the state and thus can be readily used as an agency of state language planning" (Ó Laoire & Harris, 2006, p. 7). In the Irish context this fact has also been acknowledged, and of all domains the school is perhaps the most crucial and often bears the entire burden of language planning implementation (Ó Laoire & Harris, 2006). They continue by claiming that "the reasons for this are reasonably straightforward" (Ó Laoire & Harris, 2006, p. 7) of which the school's role in the socialisation process is one (Ó Laoire & Harris, 2006). Schools, as key agencies in socialisation, "provide the state with an opportunity to shape the attitudes and behaviours of the next generation through the curriculum" taught (Ó Laoire & Harris, 2006, p. 8). Spolsky & Shohamy (2000) support the notion that schools have a role as agents of language revival, examining the concept of language planning and language education policy. They view schools as having potential in community or in national efforts to revive a language. This possibility of increasing the numbers and users speaking a particular language has been designated by Cooper (1989) as a particular type of language policy called 'acquisition policy.'

Mindful of the shortcomings of school-based language revitalisation efforts, Hornberger & King (1996, pp. 438-439), (focusing on what they term native languages and standardised native language literacy), maintain, that school initiatives in some contexts may promote the instruction and use of language "as well as facilitate the very kernel of the spirit of language revival". Of course, schools are also "the central arena for the promotion of prescriptive norms" (Ó Laoire & Harris, 2006, p. 12). Schools on their own, however, may be ineffective in saving threatened languages (May 2000).

The Irish language has been a compulsory part of the Irish curriculum since 1922 at both primary and post-primary level. Yet, 2016 census data reveal that only 39.1% of the population profess a knowledge of the Irish language.

An interesting trend can be observed from a more detailed analysis of the 2016 population surveys (Figure 2.4). This highlights the increase of knowledge and use of the Irish language in the age brackets 10–20 indicating the impact of the education system. This frequency of use decreases in the initial years following compulsory education and this attrition was commented upon in earlier census data (Murtagh, 2003). This “limited input/intake, on the one hand, and limited output, on the other” (de Bot, 2001, p. 70) leads to language attrition.

Ó Laoire & Harris (2005, p. 12) recognise that “education is also the site where larger political, social, ideological values are transmitted and reflected, the very values which fuel language revival struggle”, with the possibility of schools being “awareness-raising agents, sensitising students to language use or lack of language use in community domains and influencing linguistic beliefs, practices and management of the language community” (Ó Laoire & Harris, 2005, p. 12). Skutnabb-Kangas (2000, p. 570 cited in Ó Laoire & Harris, 2005, p. 12) envisage schools “in this context as an agent[s] of change”.

Schools also operate in global and as well as in national and local contexts, involving varying standards and norms, language attitudes, multilingualism and language prestige. Decisions on the type of programme (school-wide approaches or immersion or targeted one- way or two-way approaches) (Hornberger, 1996) are best made through a process involving not just the teachers and curriculum planners, but critically involving the speech community itself. Immersion /content and language integrated learning (CLIL) and bilingual programmes are often the most favoured in revival contexts (In the Welsh context: Jones, 1998; Baker, 2001; Regarding Maori; Spolsky, 1996; Benton & Benton, 2001; With reference to Irish: Coady & Ó Laoire, 2002). It cannot be suggested, however, that bilingual or immersion programmes can be applicable in multilingual or multicultural societies (Freeland & Patrick, 2004; Brann, 1981; Choudry, 2001; Benson, 2003).

It involves firstly, the processes of reversing language shift which are characterised by the sustained efforts of the speech community to resist

language loss and secondly, it involves language maintenance which is defined as the continued use of the language in as many domains (social situations) as possible. These processes entail conscious collective effort often in the face of adverse circumstances (King 2001, p. 3). But Armstrong (2011) proposes the questions, in his study on how language ideology becomes of interest in the formation of polices in the case of language revival:

- How exactly is an appropriate ideology for language revitalisation clarified in an organisation? and
- What is the best practice when it comes to planning language ideology?

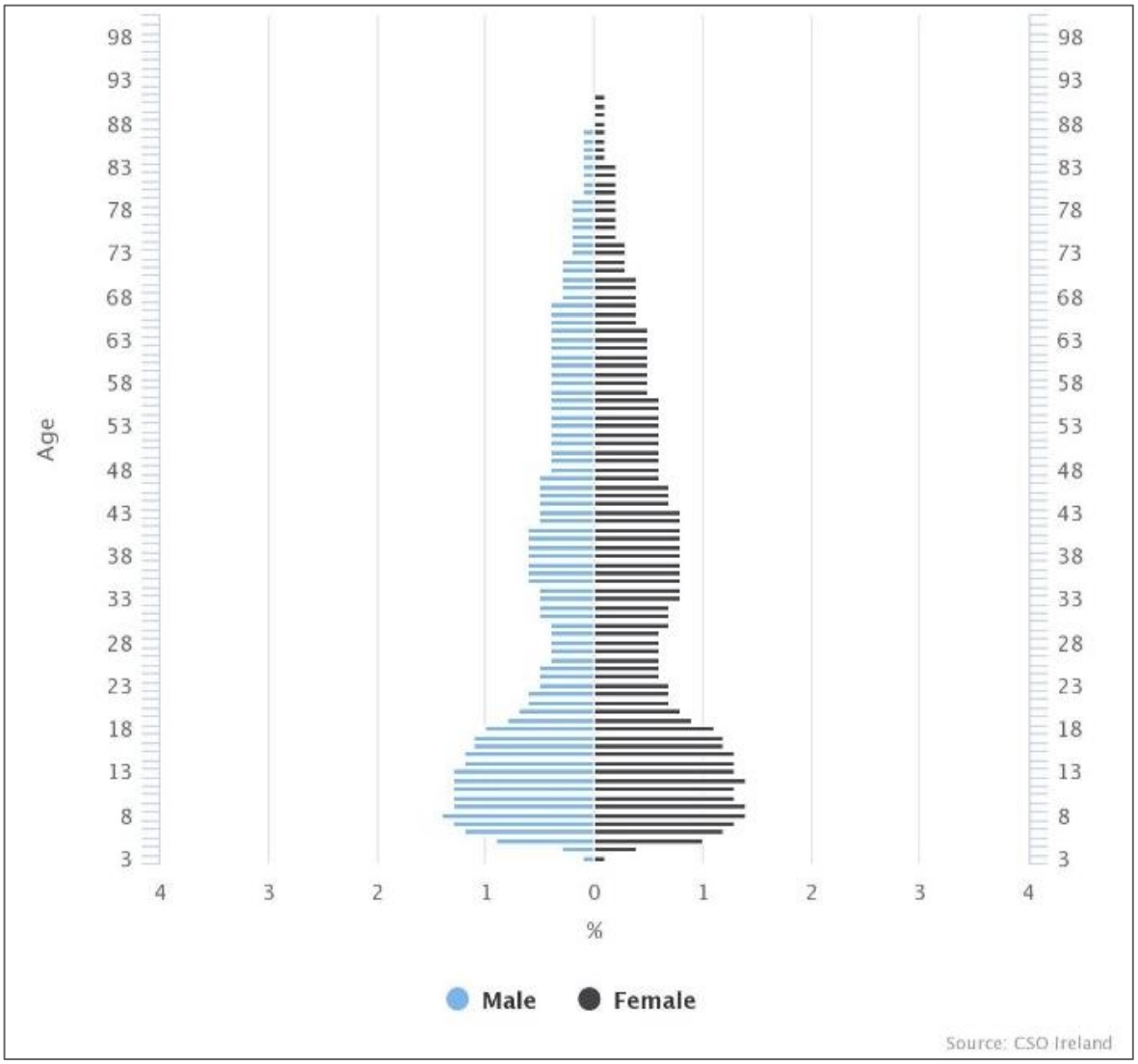
2.8.1.2 Whole school approach

In recent years, school improvement efforts have shifted away from a focus on small-scale individual teacher change “towards an increased emphasis on large-scale, whole school reform” (Muijs, 2004, pp. 487-488). Significant benefits identified in relation to a whole school approach include parallel leadership structures that build teacher competence in various parts of a school, a more cohesive school community, increased school capacity for sustainable progress, heightened aspirations, a collective focus on generating resources, recognition and sharing of expertise, and the opportunity to develop and deepen specific pedagogical knowledge linked to enhancing student success and individual learner well-being (LRI Team, 2010).

A whole school approach about English Language Learners (ELL) pedagogy could be expected to build relevant professional learning communities, such as outlined in DuFour (2004), and ultimately contribute to improving teacher efficacy with ELLs. How possible this would be in relation to the Irish language was the focus of this study. In addition, whole school approach has been effective with Pasifika children (often regarded as an ‘at risk’ group of ELLs in New Zealand education) who have responded well to it as it usually

‘means that the children are exposed to a caring and supportive school environment’ (Parkhill *et al.,* 2005, p. 60).

Figure 2. 4 Data those who stated they could speak Irish in different age groups



Source: CSO (2017)

2.9 Conclusion

The chapter began with a review of the literature pertaining to the history of the Irish language and to the area of language decline. Both are relevant in explaining the urgency of this study as Irish is a language that has been

described as endangered despite its long and interesting history. Spolsky (2004) provides a framework that is useful in studying the language situation of any organisation and assists in clarifying the current situation and the aspirations of stakeholders in the organisation in relation to the Irish language. Having reviewed the literature on the concept of the language ecology and language use, language ideologies, attitudes and beliefs, and language managements and planning, it assists in understanding the complexities involved, not only in the overlapping terminology, but in the process itself.

The next chapter outlines the methodological approaches adopted in this interpretivist research. In doing so it describes the rationale for choosing a case study design and explaining how the project progressed from beginning to completion. It describes the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) used and the manner in which the coding was done. My approach to sampling, along with my attempts to ensure the care and safety of the stakeholders, are also discussed.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Thought-Work

The mind is an old crow
who knows only to gather dead twigs,
Then take them back to the vacancy
Between the branches of the parent tree
And entwine them around the emptiness
With silence and unfailing patience
Until what was fallen, withered and lost
Is now set to fill with dreams as a nest.

(O'Donohue, 2000)

O'Donohue poetically and metaphorically describes the philosophical assumption that underpins this research which is that of interpretivism. The crow, unlike a researcher, takes twigs (thoughts, beliefs, assumptions of participants) thought to be insignificant (dead twigs i.e. perceptions participants may view as somewhat unimportant) and creates something new and meaningful (a nest i.e. a new insight to the phenomena under investigation).

This chapter begins by distinguishing between the key philosophical paradigms and value-based assumptions that underpin and influence the research approach and design of this study and the researcher's epistemological and ontological views are explained in light of their influence on the methodology.

As this is an interpretivist paradigm, this research is not value or bias-free, but has been informed by both my own constructions and beliefs, and those

of the individuals and the organisation who have participated in the research. Thus, this research is "deeply influenced by [the researcher's own] positionality" (Cousin, 2009, p. 32). Inevitably, every element of the research project has involved interpretation which is influenced by values and experience. The researcher has 31 years of Irish language teaching experience and has been employed in the organisation under study for 20 years, therefore, a commitment has been maintained, throughout the project, to maximise research objectivity. Acknowledging that researchers bring to each study their experiences, ideas, prejudices and personal philosophies, but by accounting for them in advance, enhances the transparency of possible research bias. Cognisance is taken of the reflexive account of the researcher's position in this study as outlined in Chapter 1. In order to "reduce common problems in relation to bias, the rationale for and choosing an appropriate research design", is stated clearly (Smith and Noble, 2014, p. 100).

The discussion then explores the overall research process for the main study, including details of ethical considerations, practical activities undertaken to complete the study and strategies for data collection and analysis. All components of data analysis that were employed are explained.

A qualitative approach was followed, and a single case study design was used which sought to:

- explore the prospects and possibilities of broadening the use of the Irish language in an English medium post-primary school in the West of Ireland (outside of the Irish language classroom)[3].

[3] This entails the extent to which the Irish language could be promoted in the school environment, both aurally and visually. The suggestion is unlike the practice of primary schools who use 'Gaeilge Neamhfhoirmiúil' (informal Irish) where teachers and students are encouraged to use Irish outside of the allotted time for teaching it. What is different in the post-primary content is that students are exposed to various environments and people within the school community each day (business, science, technology classrooms etc.) and the extent to which stakeholders are able or willing to participate in a policy of a broader use of the Irish langauge is central to the investigation.

• explore the attitudes of various stakeholders in the school community towards the Irish language to elicit the extent to which they would be able or willing to engage in such an endeavour.

• explore the practices and policies they envisage would be beneficial in introducing a broader use of the Irish language in the school.

The decision to do a qualitative single case study, within a single context (Rowley, 2002), and described by (Yin, 2014) as embedded, matches the orientation of my research questions towards describing and interpreting the ideas, experiences and beliefs of the various stakeholders. A qualitative approach permits studying people in their natural setting and collecting rich data to understand the meaning of their actions and beliefs from their own perspective (Bauer *et al.*, 1998). Accordingly, this study took place in the natural setting of a rural community school in the West of Ireland using interviews of various stakeholders and an unobtrusive data collection procedure consisting of observation of the use of the Irish language, comments expressed about the language and visibility of the Irish language in the school outside of the Irish language classroom. Documentary evidence, (school brochures, quarterly published newsletters, minutes of staff meetings, school prospectus, headed notepaper, school website and social media used by the school) was also collated and scrutinised to examine what use or views of the Irish language were evident.

3.2 Philosophical underpinnings

Research paradigms, which are continually evolving, inherently reflect our beliefs about the world we live in and want to live in. Based on this belief, Guba & Lincoln (1994) distinguish between positivist (who believe knowledge can be reached based on experiment and observation), post-positivist (where emphasis is placed on meaning, experience and knowledge as 'multiple, relational and not bounded by reason' (Henriques, *et. al.,* 1998, p. xviii) and postmodernist enquiry, grouping postmodernism and post-structuralism within 'critical theory' (where the ontological basis, postulates that reality exists independently of whether it is observed or experienced).

However, the two main philosophical paradigms that underpin social research (Corbetta, 2003, p. 12) are positivism and interpretivism, with opposing and conflicting theoretical views on how social reality is understood. Each perspective has generated a range of research methodologies and strategies most appropriate to that school of thought (Corbetta, 2003).

3.2.1 The interpretive paradigm

The interpretive paradigm, therefore, does not claim a universal truth but holds that social phenomena "...are not only produced through social interaction but that they are in a constant state of revision" (Bryman, 2008, p. 19). It is "a more 'people-centred' approach, which acknowledges the research's integration within the research environment – that is, where each will impact on the perceptions and understandings of the other" (Brundrett & Rhodes, 2013, p. 14). To "explore the 'meanings' of events and phenomena from the subjects' perspectives" interpretive researchers immerse themselves in the research environment (Morrison, 2002, p. 18). The evidence collected by interpretivists (through interviews, observations, study of documentary evidence) is qualitative in nature, offering a rich and deep description of the research environment as a unique context. The researcher, in this research on the Irish language, is working in the organisation being investigated, giving the opportunity for easy immersion as described by Morrison (2002). Such researchers embrace the notion of subjectivity and the personal involvement of the researcher in constructing their own knowledge and beliefs. However, there remains a commitment to objectivity by acknowledging the effects of people's biases (Robson, 2002). However, as outlined by Morrison (2002, p. 15);

> "objectivity is impossible, since the social world … is incapable of the reduction required by the scientific approach and the rich data that can be gained from qualitative approaches are the only way to provide access to the complexities of educational life".

To be objective as possible the researcher should be unbiased in his descriptions and interpretations, or the researcher must gain trust and establish rapport in order to get close to the study objects and to generate legitimate and truthful descriptions (Babbie & Mouton, 2001, p. 273). During the research process the researcher respected all participants and their thoughts, ideas and opinions and did not allow the measuring instruments distort the replies in any way. The participants were also allowed to speak freely without interruption when asked questions.

Qualitative research is interpretive (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Mason, 1996; Creswell, 1998; Marchall & Rossman, 1999; Angen, 2000) and has been defined as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world … the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical methods … that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3), where “the emphasis … is upon words rather than numbers” and “textual analysis predominates” (Morrison, 2002, pp. 19-21). It is hermeneutic[4] and inductive[5] (Maxwell, 2004, p. 36), heterogeneous in methods, or uses multiple methods. It is reflexive, deep, rigorous, and rejects "the natural sciences as a model" (Silverman, 2000, p. 8). It makes use of flexible analysis and explanation methods, sensitive to both the studied people's special features and the social context in which data is produced (Mason, 1996; Gobo, 2005). It focuses on “real, located practice, and it is based on an interactive research process involving both the researcher and the social actors” (Flick, 1998; Marchall & Rossman, 1999), which in this study are stakeholders in a post-primary school in the West of Ireland.

It’s a suitable paradigm for this study insofar as it takes an interest in actors' "perspectives on their own worlds" (Marshell & Rossman, 1999; Creswell,

[4] Hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation (van Manen, 1964). It involves the interpretation of texts of interviews and isolating common themes, thereby acquiring an understanding and meaning of the phenomenon. Hermeneutics focus on entering “another’s world to discover the practical wisdom, possibilities, and understandings found there.” (Polit & Beck, 2012, p. 229).

[5]Inductive approach to research commences with observations and theories are proposed towards the end of the research process as a result of observations (Goddard & Melville, 2004). It “involves the search for pattern from observation and the development of explanations – theories – for those patterns through series of hypotheses”. (Bernard, 2011, p. 7).

1998), and attempts to appreciate those worlds through such perspectives (Savage, 2000, 2006).

It is an appropriate philosophical paradigm in this study as it is interested in the way in which the world is understood, experimented, or produced (Mason, 1996) by people's lives, behaviour, and interactions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Regarding this study, the interest will be on how the Irish language is understood, used and perceived in stakeholders' lives (in a school organisation) and how they interact with it. What was sought were stakeholders 'meanings' (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Maxwell, 1996; Silverman, 2000, Silverman, 2005), their own personal narratives or life stories (Atkinson, 2005), their own accounts of internal life experiences, (Whittemore *et al.,* 2001; Morse, 2005). What was required were the actors' "language," in their "forms of social interactions" (Silverman, 2000, p. 89), their different knowledge, and "viewpoints and practices" (Flick, 1998, p. 6), and what was of interest was what people thought and what that thinking "means, implies, and signifies" (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 875). This aligns with the aims in this work.

3.2.2 Ontology and Epistemology

With regards to the philosophical underpinnings of this project, the alignment and consistency between ontology, epistemology and methodology are crucial (Scott, 2000). Pring (2000) highlights this cruciality of aligning epistemology and ontology and claims that researchers can reach different conclusions about the same questions or hypotheses. By disclosing, therefore, the philosophical stance that underpins this research it helps with critical evaluation of the research (Pring, 2000).

The interpretive philosophical approach that underpins this research embraces the notion of subjectivity and the personal involvement of the researcher in the research (Bassey, 2003) while it aims to "understand the subjective world of human experience" (Cohen & Manion, 2007, p. 21), suggesting that "reality is socially constructed" (Mertens, 2005, p. 12). The commitment is to understand and interpret processes which are occurring in

their natural settings in a holistic manner, acknowledging that there are multiple realities. As discussed above, while accepting that an objective world exists, it does not accept that an objective truth exists ‘out there’. It assumes the world might not be readily apprehended and that variable relations or facts might be only probabilistic, not deterministic (Gephart, 1999). Interpretivists assume that knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation, hence there is no objective knowledge which is independent of thinking, reasoning humans and therefore researchers tends to rely upon the "participants' views of the situation being studied" (Creswell, 2003, p. 8) and recognises the impact on the research of their own background and experiences. People - unlike most non-human forms of life - interpret or give meaning to their environment and themselves. The ways in which they do this are shaped by the particular cultures in which they live, and this generates the actions and institutions in which they participate. They do not generally begin with a theory rather they "generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meanings" (Creswell, 2003, p. 9) throughout the research process.

Epistemological and ontological stances influence the philosophical stances or paradigms that inform research, by providing frameworks of ideas and perspectives upon which methodology is based (Gray, 2004). The epistemological position concerns knowledge, what constitutes knowledge, and how we get that knowledge. Interpretative epistemological assumption is that knowledge about the social world is based upon our ability to experience the world as others experience it. ‘Reality’, in this sense, is created by people experiencing and interpreting the world subjectively. The task of science is not to try to establish causal relationships/laws (something considered almost impossible in the social world), rather, it is to understand how and why people interpret the world in various ways (Lee & Baskerville, 2003). Knowledge is thus seen to be comprised of multiple sets of interpretations that are part of the social and cultural context in which it occurs. The epistemological position of the researcher is that an individual’s reality or knowledge of the social world can only be constructed through the

perceptions and beliefs of an individual who is influenced by time, context, circumstances and experiences.

As this research focused on the perceptions of various stakeholders of the Irish language and the perception of using it in a broader and meaningful sense in the school, it is subjective and personal. This aligns with the epistemological foundation of agency, which acknowledges the personally mediated construction of knowledge (Billett, 2011), which located this study in the interpretive paradigm. This is reflective of human agency, which is concerned with individuals' intentions and actions to enable change, and the assertion that there can be no action without agency (Fallon & Barnett, 2009). Furthermore, interpretive researchers hold, that there should be an openness to the understanding of people whom researchers study and tentativeness in the way researchers hold or apply their conceptions of those being studied (Giorgi, 1997; Husen, 1999; van Manen, 1998, cited in Kim, 2003, p. 13).

This research is based on an underlying ontological position that the reality of the social world is constructed by the participants engaged within it, a reality that is made up of events or objects as perceived by individuals. Its position is that the social world is very different to the natural world. People, for example, act consciously in order to create their social existence, therefore human consciousness is highly significant. It is not possible to make cause and effect statements about the social world that remain true for ever, and as a result limited and very specific causal statements can be made. This, therefore, can involve a range of perceptions about the nature of reality (Morrison, 2002). Furthermore, ontology can be external to an individual or considered as a reality that is made up of events or objects as perceived by individual consciousness. This aligns with the researcher's aims in this study, allowing for the exploration of various stakeholders' perceptions about the possibility and prospects of a broader use of the Irish language in their daily lives in a school environment and for exploring their intentions or "behaviour-with-meaning" (King, 2012, p. 9).

There is therefore a strong correlation between the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of this study. It acknowledges both individuals' learning and knowledge, along with societal changes, are shaped by human agency or intentionality (Billett, 2011), and these are further reflected in the research methodology. The qualitative research methodology used drew on interviews with individual stakeholders of the school community to gain insights into their experiences, beliefs and impressions of the Irish language and the possibility of broadening its use in the school. However, just as individuals' experiences and understandings are influenced by their values and beliefs, this research is influenced by the researcher's values (Bryman, 2008) or positionality in relation to the study (see Chapter 1).

3.3 Methodology.

3.3.1 Case study

Adding to the coherence between epistemology and ontology, a case study research approach was adopted as a case study highlights "the uniqueness of events or actions, arising from their being shaped by the meanings of those who are the participants in the situation" (Pring, 2000, p. 40). At the pilot stage it was recognised that not only was the case study institution "geographically convenient" (Yin, 2003, p. 79), but it was also considered that the informants, as colleagues, students and parents of the students, it would be "congenial and accessible" (Yin, 2003, p. 79).

A case study research method can be defined as an empirical inquiry that investigates "a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (Yin, 1984, p. 23). It allowed for an in-depth study into specific phenomena in their natural settings (Robson, 1993; Denscombe, 2003) and it emphasised the importance of the relationships within the context of the research (Yin, 1994). Case studies align with qualitative research (Skate, 1995) using mainly qualitative instruments and purposive sampling. As a research design, a

case study guided the research from the questions to the conclusion and included steps for collecting, analysing and interpreting evidence (Yin, 2003). This qualitative research aimed to get a holistic view of stakeholders' perceptions (Gray, 2004) of the Irish language with a view to ascertaining if it could be feasible to incorporate a broader use of the Irish language outside the classroom and in perceiving how they would act if such a policy was in place. Case study research is suited to this study, as it is usually small-scale research carried out in real settings, with emphasis on depth of study not breadth (Denscombe, 2003) and on "words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data" (Bryman, 2004, p. 366).

As the case study is situated in the researcher's own school it provides the empirical context which Bassey (1999) describes as a localised boundary of space and time. This proximity to the organisation enabled the researcher to record the reality and thick description of participants' thoughts about, and feelings for, the Irish language, giving a detailed description of data (Geertz, 1973). The aim of this study is to understand this one school organisation and the prospects and possibilities of incorporating a school language policy, where there would be a broader use of the Irish language in the environment. It is not the aim to generalise from the findings in this study. However, the researcher does envisage that practitioners may be able to reflect upon the research findings and see how adaptable it is to their own organisation. As a result, this case study should be best viewed as 'a step to action' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007)**.**

The focus of the researcher's interest is humans' reaction to a possible change in policy regarding the Irish language usage in the school community and as it takes place in a unique instance, the research design I chose had to be flexible. If new issues became apparent, as the study progressed, the researcher had to be able to change the design, a process known as progressive focusing (Parlett & Hamilton, 1976). As a school is a dynamic, animate, changing environment, this progressive focusing is necessary as what might have been effective several years ago may or may not be

appropriate today (Erlandson *et al*., 1993, p. 46). This flexibility is catered for in the case study research design.

According to Merriam (1998, p. 19):

> "Case studies are differentiated from other types of qualitative research in that they are intensive descriptions and analysis of a single unit or bounded system such as an individual, program, event, group, intervention, or community".

This mirrors the purposes of the case study, as it provides descriptions of vivid experiences for the reader in the context being described. It also charts future directions for the school. It has the capacity to facilitate change and issues may be revised for future consideration (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). As there was no preconceived hypothesis on this topic and as the nature of the research questions and the type of result was uncertain, the best research design was the case study (Merriam, 1998).

3.3.1.1 Single case study

Using a single-case study is a "common design for doing case study research … [and] is eminently justifiable under certain conditions" (Yin, 2018, p. 53). Yin lists some of the five rationales for a single case study;

1. "A critical case – i.e. one that can test a particular theory.
2. An extreme or unique case – for example, a study of a rare disorder.
3. A representative case – a case that is representative, or typical, of a particular situation.
4. A revelatory case – one that reveals a phenomenon hitherto unexplored.
5. A longitudinal case-a study of changes over time" Yin (2003, pp. 41-2).

The case being investigated in this research is neither a critical, extreme nor a longitudinal case. However, it could represent both a representative case and a revelatory case. Representative case is where the objective is to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday situation (in this

case a rural community school's attitude towards the Irish language). The lessons learned may provide social processes in relation to some theoretical interest (Yin, 2018, p. 50). It could also be described as a revelatory case – a case where the attitudes and perceptions of stakeholders in an English-medium post-primary school are explored in relation to grass-root attempts to promoting the Irish language when the "researcher has an opportunity to observe and analyse a phenomenon previously inaccessible to social science enquiry" (Yin, 2018, p. 50). On reflection, this case therefore would best be described as a representative case – representative of the views of stakeholders in a rural, English-medium post-primary school in the West of Ireland as they ponder on the prospects and possibilities of broadening the use of the Irish langauge in the school (See discussion on internal and external context p. 14 – 20).

Embarking on such a design is fraught with potential vulnerability and requires careful investigation prior to deciding on its suitability as a research design. Whatever the rationale for doing a single-case study, researchers must ensure that "the case may not later turnout to be the case it was thought to be at the outset" (Yin, 2018, p. 51). The researcher must ensure that the case is worthy of study and will have some impact, whether minimal or not, on some aspect of society. Careful investigation of the initial case, to minimize the changes of misrepresentation and to maximize the access needed to collect the case study evidence is paramount. A fair warning is "not to commit to any single-case study unless these major concerns have been covered". (Yin, 2018, p. 51).

This case study is best described as an embedded single-case study since the same single-case study involved units of analysis at more than one level. The case study is about the prospects of broadening the use of the Irish language within a school community - a single, large, complex entity (Yin, 2018, p. 52) but the case study has several subunits of analysis. The main unit was the organisation as a whole – the case – but the smallest unit was the individual member. In addition to these two units the case study also collected data from several intermediary units, the teachers, the students,

the ancillary staff, and the parents to which specific groups of members belonged. Different data came from different sources of evidence including interviews, observational data and documentation, sources discussed later in the chapter. Thus, an embedded case study design can serve as an important device for maintaining a case study's focus (Yin, 2018, p. 53).

One major concern with embedded case study design is that it often fails to return to the larger unit of analysis – the original case, a concern the researcher remained conscious of throughout the study.

3.3.2 Research tools

Obtaining an in-depth understanding of reasons for stakeholders' opinions and their impressions on how best to implement language policy, a multiplicity of perspectives was needed, rooted in a specific context (Lewis, 2003, p. 52). Interviewing different stakeholders (teaching staff, auxiliary staff, students and parents) gave the multiplicity of perspectives, while the different research tools (interviews, documentary evidence, observational data including photographic evidence and field notes) provided a breadth of data collection methods. This also afforded the opportunity to triangulate data which strengthen the research findings and conclusions (Yin, 2003). Case study is known as a triangulated research strategy. The need for triangulation arises from the ethical need to confirm the validity of the processes. The protocols that are used to ensure accuracy and alternative explanations are called triangulation (Stake, 1995), which, according to Denzin, (1970, p. 291), is "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon". The use of a case study approach therefore seemed a logical choice.

Before embarking on the case study, I recognised the necessity to approach with caution (Cohen *et al*., 2007) beginning first with a wide focus for initial data gathering (Nisbit and Watts, 1984). As a case study generates a large amount of data from multiple sources it is imperative that the researcher, being the primary instrument (Merriam, 1988), be familiar with aspects of data collection and analysis. This prevents the researcher from becoming

overwhelmed by the amount of data and to prevent the loss of sight of the original research purpose and questions (Gillham, 2005).

3.4 Ethical considerations.

Ethical considerations have been described as “a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others” (Cavan, 1977, cited in Cohen *et al.,* 2000, p. 56). Moreover, as this is qualitative research which involves human interaction it is more complicated and susceptible to risks (Howe & Moses, 1999). Therefore, by its very nature, qualitative research is immersed in a “messy, chaotic reality of on-the-spot personal interaction...sensitivity and experience” (Holbrook, 1997, p. 49). Stake (1995, p. 447) emphasises that researchers are “guests’ in the participants’ world and ‘manners should be good’ and ‘code of ethics strict”. Furthermore, ethical issues “should at all times be at the forefront of the researcher’s agenda” (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006, cited in Creswell, 2008, p. 13) with reference to “respecting the rights of participants, to honouring research sites … and to reporting research fully and honestly” (Creswell, 2008, p. 11), thus ensuring the essential factors of “integrity and quality and transparency” (ESRC, 2010, p. 3). Hence, ensuring research conforms to the strictest ethical principles, rules as set by The British Educational Research Association Guidelines (BERA), the Ethical Principles of the University of Lincoln and the School of Education Research Ethical Guidelines was adhered to. Ethical approval for this research was granted prior to the commencement of any data collection technique (See Appendix A). In Ireland there is currently no single regulatory system or body responsible for research ethics. However, in keeping with current best practice standards of child protection, this research complied with the requirements of ‘Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children’ (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011). ‘Children First’ provides information on protecting and promoting child welfare and the best practice response to personal evidence or reports that children are being harmed or at risk of harm. In accordance with various requirements permission was sought from parents/guardians and from the school management

In this study, the researcher, even though a member of the staff, was sensitive to his position in the research as a “guest[s] in the private spaces of the world” (Stake, 2005, p. 459). Ethical complexity was compounded as ethical considerations were apparent at two levels, although there was an explicit interface between the two: participation of the case study institution, and participation of individuals. In essence then, the researcher was a guest in two overlapping worlds. Regarding the interface between negotiation with the institution and the individual participants, a paramount ethical concern was to ensure that participants experienced “freedom from coercion” (Walliman, 2005, p. 345). Freedom in the sense that participants did not feel obliged, due to my relationship with them as a colleague, a teacher or a researcher, to participate if they did not wish. One junior student who was chosen in a focus group asked to be exempt from the interview and a few parents and ancillary staff were not willing to be interviewed which highlighted that they did not feel coercion to participate.

Ethical factors that must be considered in research include issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality which underpin all qualitative research (Fraenkel *et al*., 1990; Raffe *et al*., 1989) along with ethical factors in collecting, storing and maintaining data and uses of data. They are viewed as critical issues in qualitative research and regarded by some as the ‘key issue’ in research with human beings (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Evans, 1996).

3.4.1 Informed Consent

Issues in relation to informed consent are seen to be one of the most critical issues in qualitative research and regarded by some as the 'key issue' in research with humans (Bogdan & Biklen 1992; Evans, 1996). As a single case study, the importance to undertake the research with the full knowledge and agreement of the school in question was paramount. Therefore, a meeting with the school’s principal and with the chairperson was sought and arranged. This negotiation could only take place within a framework of clarity about expectations and commitments from both parties, particularly related to issues of confidentiality, anonymity, data protection procedures and

intellectual property rights (see Appendix B). This meeting led to permission being gained from the board of management to do the research in the school (Appendix C).

As observational data informed part of the research, posters was placed at strategic locations throughout the school and a notice was placed in the school newsletter. The rationale was to inform stakeholders of the title of the research being carried out in the organisation and inviting them to seek clarification or ask questions (Appendix D). It was an ethical approach to inform all students, employees and visitors that there was information being collated regarding the use of the Irish language. A number of people approached the researcher asking questions and I forwarded information which was duly recorded in the researcher's field notes. This unexpected data added depth to other forms of data collection insofar as others came forward to contribute attitudes and beliefs regarding the Irish language which were recorded in the observational diary.

To ensure good ethical management consent, the consent form (Appendix E) for both students and adults explained the aim and nature of the research, stressing the value of their contribution in providing an insight into stakeholders' perceptions of the possibilities and prospects of broadening the use of the Irish language in the school. It explained why interviews are being recorded and/or notes would be being taken during the interview and how the interviews would be transcribed. It explained how the digital and written information will be stored and how the information will be disposed of after the project completion. Finally, it was clarified how the information would be used (Cohen and Manion, 2007).

They were aware that:

- They may be able to refuse to have their interview audio recorded.
- They may request to stop the recording of the interview at any time (Gilbert, 1993).
- They may withdraw from the project at any time they wish and ask for their interview not to be used (Oliver, 2003).

Respect for ‘vulnerable populations’ was considered throughout (Creswell, 1994, p. 89) and with this in mind, permission from parents/guardians of minors was received prior to any interview with students in the focus group (Appendix F).

In addition to the informed consent, an opportunity was offered, and a time allotted, for each participant to ask questions at the end of each interview. This process alleviated any stress or anxiety participant may have as a result of the process. The participants were also informed that the research findings would be made available to them when the project was completed. A signed consent form was received before commencement of any interview. (Appendix G).

All digital data gathered was initially stored electronically, encrypted and password protected and when transcribed, the data was filed securely in hard copy format and electronically. The researcher was the only one who has access to the transcripts and all coding protected the identities of the participants. On completion of the research project and the study period of the researcher in the University of Lincoln the data will be destroyed. Hard copies will be shredded and any data on the data drives used will be deleted.

Transcribed interviews documents were prepared, and all participants were given a copy of their interview (if they requested it). Rowling (1994), cited in Konza (2005, pp. 15-16) recommends the return of interview transcripts to interviewees for confirmation as one technique which is aimed at protecting their interests. This seems appropriate as they could state that they were happy for the transcript to remain unaltered.

Four of fourteen interviewees requested to review the transcripts. No participant from the three focus groups wished to examine their contribution as recorded in the transcripts. Apart from a few clarifications requested by the interviewees and a few typing errors; the texts remained unaltered. This demonstrated to the researcher that the interviews were transcribed correctly and without any bias tone.

3.4.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

Confidentiality and anonymity was assured to all participants prior to the commencement of interviews and before the agreement took place between researcher and interviewees They were informed of the nature of the research and the purpose of their participation in the research and it highlighted that the data could not be used in any other way nor for any other purpose except for that identified in the research agreement (Cohen and Manion, 2007, p. 378).

Interviewees were assured that all information gathered for the research remains anonymous. A coding system was used to protect participants' identities and to facilitate the divorce of transcripts from their original sources as they were collated. This was a difficult task as the context is a single school in which the researcher is also employed but every attempt was made to remain aware of this factor (Appendix H).

3.4.3 Data validity

Achieving validity involves reducing the amount of bias (Morgan, 1997). Sources of bias are characteristics of both the interviewer and the respondent (Silverman, 2008), so in this research the researcher had to acknowledge his own possible bias. Therefore, points of view the researcher supports must not be featured while contrary opinions from respondents must not be ignored. Some difficulties were envisaged eliciting the participants' views as there is a high level of rapport between most of the participants and the researcher who is an Irish language teacher in the organisation. By ensuring that all participants were aware that the research focus was on their impressions and experiences, and not on any personal aspect of their lives, an account of their views in relation to the Irish language was elicited. The researcher's senior position in the school was explained and participants were assured that this research could not affect promotion or demotion of respondents. This information, accompanied by

the fact that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions, assisted in assuring a truthful response from the interviewees' individual perspectives.

Clear transcriptions soon after each interview assisted in reducing any errors or biasness. Further risks were involved in the open-ended design of my research questions which could bring up topics outside the scope of my research. However, prompts and probes assisted to guide the interviewee back to the topic. A clear analysis schedule was developed after the interviews were concluded, to ensure codes and concepts are created according to what was said, not what the interviewer might like to hear.

3.4.4 Storing and maintaining data

There were three sources of information gathered. The primary method was interviews with various stakeholders but notes from observational (diary and photographic evidence of the school environment) were used as was printed evidence from school documentation. This study, including data collection and analysis, was carried out over a 9-month period commencing in September 2017. In this section of the chapter the processes through which the substantive study progressed over those 9 months (including the pilot phase, which took place earlier in May 2017) are explained. Following receipt of formal agreement and acceptance of the research proposal and ethical approval, as required by the researcher's employers, the pilot study phase was commenced.

On recording interviews on a digital recording device, they were transferred to two external hard drives which are encrypted and had a password code only known to the researcher. Two external devices were used in the event of one of them malfunctioning. Hard copy transcripts of the interviews are securely retained in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher's home. On completion of the research all the data will be stored securely for five years before deleting and destroying as was stated in the ethics application, and subsequently approved. The research work was overseen by my University

supervisor who was consulted about all aspects of the project in relation to ethical issues.

3.5 Research process

3.5.1 The pilot study.

During the pilot work, the researcher designed a pamphlet to outline what the research entailed (Appendix I). The pilot study interviews were held to test the suitability of the interview schedule. An ancillary staff member (a Special needs assistant) and one teacher were interviewed in face-to-face interviews. Envisaging the difficulties to get parents to visit the school, a telephone interview took place with a parent. A group of three Transition Year students (15-16-year olds) and three first year students (12-13 year-old) were selected for the focus group interview.

First, valuable insights into the researcher's ability as an interviewer were highlighted as there were issues with timing, probing and keeping interviewees focused on the topic were addressed. The interview schedule changed slightly as some of the questions regarding their own experiences learning in Irish at school led to long anecdotes which did not contribute much to the research questions. As a result, some questions were changed and some even eliminated as they produced redundant data outside the remit of the study. The pilot interviews were too long and too much time spent on the first two research themes left little time to discuss language management questions.

On transcribing the recordings, it became evident that opportunities were missed to probe for more information in certain areas. Group dynamics were of importance in relation to the focus group interview with students. The younger students were inhibited to speak as the older students were more vocal in their replies. Moreover, despite efforts to make all students feel at ease, by using their own social room for the interview, and by allowing them to talk about other issues before we began the interview, there were a few students who still were shy and did not participate without much prompting. As a result of the pilot

study it was decided to have one junior and one senior group focus group. A Transition Year group were also selected. The first interview was with this group and it afforded an opportunity to see if the new interview schedule worked better and if the researcher's skill had improved.

The telephoned interview with a parent, who informed me she had completed a Master's degree and knew how to answers questions, may have explained the comprehensive answers given to each question. However, not being able to see the person answering questions, missing facial expressions and nuances did not allow me to ask as many probing questions as I had with face to face interviews. Technical issues like the loudspeaker mode on the phone did not work properly and I had to revert to handheld phone which meant I had to take notes as the recording device did not pick up all the information from the phone. This distraction of having to take notes did not assist. Moreover, the interview was interrupted twice, by the doorbell ringing, and by a dog barking. I decided not to pursue the telephone interview in the research.

Piloting the project also highlighted the importance of the precise wording of questions which are critical for the construction of any research interview. For example, an initial question, about their knowledge of government initiatives was phrased in a manner that led to the interviewees feeling ignorant. (e.g. "What is your knowledge about the *Language Act 2003*?"). The question was rephrased to ask interviewees if they had ever heard of any of the following initiatives to which they could answer a yes or no and an opportunity given to them to say where/how they heard of the initiative or indeed to ask questions. This was evidently less intimidating.

The three sources of information gathering are now explained in greater detail.

3.5.2 The Interviews

This research explored stakeholders' perceptions in an English medium post-primary school of broadening the use of the Irish language in the school and therefore interviews were appropriate to ascertain in-depth insights from the participants (Denscombe, 2003) about 'behavioural events' (Yin, 2009, p. 108). An interview is "a conversation between people in which one person has the role of researcher" (Gray, 2004, p. 213). "Overall, interviews are an essential source of case study evidence because most case studies are about human affairs or behavioural events" (Yin, 2009, p. 108), "where individual historical accounts are required of how a particular phenomenon developed" (Robson, 2002, p. 271).

There are various types of interviews based on where the control of the interview lies (Powney & Walls, 1987) or the amount of structure used in their format (Robson, 2002), namely: fully structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Semi-structured interviews align themselves well with the interpretive researcher using a qualitative analysis to research (Bryman, 2004; Gray, 2004). Due to its flexibility, balanced by structure and the quality of the data obtained, it could be argued that the semi–structured interview is the most important way of conducting a research interview (Gillham, 2005). The interview method provides an empirical focus for the researcher and an allowance of freedom for the respondent. Both the focus of the researcher and the freedom of the respondent are essential if anything of worth is to be gained from the interviews (McCain, 2005). To get close to the data necessary, and to construct reality in ways that are consistent and compatible with the participants' real worlds, a non-interventive and empathic approach to data collection was required. The use of semi-structured interviews, which facilitated probing more deeply into areas (Denscombe, 2003; Bryman, 2004) and providing "scope for those interviewed to expound the full significance of their actions" (Pring, 2000, p. 39), was selected.

This technique provides scope for those interviewed to expound the full significance of their actions (Pring, 2000, p. 39), and facilitated discussions around any relevant information that may have been omitted in the literature review. Various stakeholders, depending on their role in the organisation may have different experiences for their various positions and therefore a semi-structured interview schedule was more appropriate. They allowed for an interest in the interviewee's perspective and an ability to respond to the direction of the interviewee. With the semi-structured interview, the interviewer "is prepared to be flexible in terms of the order in which the topics are considered, and, perhaps more significantly, to let the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher" (Denscombe 2003, p.167).

The use of semi-structured interviews is appropriate when the researcher "knows enough about the study topic to frame the needed discussion in advance" (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 94) but "not enough to be able to anticipate the answers" (Morse & Richards, 2002). Well planned interviews can be successful data acquisition tools. However, as there was no preconceived notion of what the results of the interviews would be and as this was a single case study, the researcher envisaged and was prepared to interview until there was no new knowledge being forwarded (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative research seeks 'saturation'. How many is not an issue. What is required is '*verstehn*' or deep understanding. Having completed the first interview I adapted some of the questions and added new dimensions that arose (Bryman, 2004).

3.5.2.1 Sampling

The selection of individual interviewees from within the case study's institution was initially informed by the experience of the pilot project. In order, therefore, to clarify who would be included in the sample of stakeholders to participate in the semi-structured interviews it was decided to take four strands within the school community (the teaching staff, the ancillary staff, the students and the parents -see Appendix J). Fogelman

(2002, p. 98) makes the distinction between ‘probability sampling’ and ‘nonprobability sampling’, where the former indicates researcher control over the sample and the latter implies a less systematic approach with no researcher control. Whilst, the interview sample were non probability sampling efforts were made to interview a balance in terms of gender, in terms of position in the organisation. ‘Probability sampling’ would require “availability and accessibility of a sampling frame” (Fogelman, 2002, p. 99). However, many parents invited to participate were unwilling, believing they had nothing to offer the research. Pawson and Tilley, in their realist critique of traditional, standard approaches, argue that the “data collection priorities are set within theory” (1997, p. 159) and that what matters, as addressed in the pilot study, is ensuring participation of those “who might know” (Pawson & Tilley, 1997, p. 160) and including “all the social situations that are relevant to the research, rather than attempting to reproduce the characteristics of the population in full” (Corbetta, 2003, p. 268). Therefore, the participation of stakeholders from the school community emerged, to some extent, through the qualitative investigative process (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27) and could be described as ‘purposeful sampling’. Purposeful sampling is the most common sampling strategy. In this type of sampling, participants are selected or sought after based on pre-selected criteria based on the research question. This flexible, yet structured method, evolved through learning from the pilot study, allowed the researcher to maximise opportunities to develop and deepen the data available as part of the process of becoming more entrenched in the field (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), “facilitate[ing] the exploration of the unexpected and unusual” (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2001, p. 5). Thus, the variation in the sample is, as far as possible, reflective of the characteristics within the stakeholders.

Whilst there was no intention to replicate all the features of the various stakeholders (Corbetta, 2003) in respect of the participants in this project, the following three variables were identified as: gender, age and geographical dispersion. When selected, all participants also self-assessed their own perceptions of the four linguistic skills as outlined in the Common European Framework of Referencing for languages (CEFR). All teachers

who were asked agreed to be interviewed. From the experience of the pilot interviews, it was decided to ask student representatives on the student council, who were well accustomed to expressing themselves in similar situations. The focus group of students (six Transition Year students, six junior students and six senior students) the latter two had been elected by their peers earlier in the year, were selected at random. One junior student withdrew her name and another student was asked to join the focus group. The ancillary staff were shy, and they felt that they had nothing to offer the project despite my explanation that it was an investigation about their opinions. One eventually agreed to be interviewed. A delay with the interviewing came from my efforts to involve parents. Not having access to data about the parent population, I initially invited all parents by letter, to participate in the study. The letter explained the project and sought their assistance. I envisaged that I would select a purposeful sample to interview from the replies. No reply was received from this endeavour. Sending a second letter to a smaller number of parents of students I teach was also unsuccessful. This called for a non-random sampling technique called snow-ball sampling (Warren, 2001) where each research participant is asked to identify other potential research participants who have a certain characteristic. A parent whose son was in first year, who the researcher did not teach, was approached and she agreed to be interviewed on her day off work. She then named a second parent who had a daughter in 5th year and when approached, he also agreed. At his interview he suggested I look at the parent representatives on the board of management and on the parents' committee. This gave me a list of parents and, when approached, they consented to be interviewed giving three men and three women from a variety of backgrounds and different socio-economic strata within the community. The principal, as a senior member of staff, was the first to be interviewed.

In total, 14 individual interviews with various stakeholders were held and three group interviews with six students in each group were carried out. The sample size reflects the notion of 'criterion based' and 'representative-based' sampling (Creswell, 1998) as discussed above. It is also the result of

sampling based on saturation, whereby data collection from that source was considered to be complete when relevant data categories were exhausted (Cousin, 2009; Endacott, 2005).

Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed as part of an ongoing process of initial familiarisation and identification of emerging themes. The recording device (Dictaphone) allowed the researcher to listen back to recording and was left free to take notes throughout the interviewing process regarding changes of tone or body gestures. For examples the Junior focus group were becoming very distracted towards the end of the interview which I noted and brought the interview to an end without further probing. On two occasion when interviewing parents, the Dictaphone would not work so I had to record on my own iPhone which I copied and transferred to NVivo 12 to be transcribed. Of interest here was I sensed two parents were more relaxed while being interviewed as there were accustomed to having a phone on the table rather than a strange piece of recording equipment.

A suitable time and place were arranged with stakeholders who had consented. A few days prior to each interview I spoke with adult participants, either face to face or by phone, confirming the appointed time, talking about my role in the organisation where applicable, and giving them more knowledge about my research. This was important as it "incorporated two important aspects of the process of relationship building" establishing "access and acceptance through goodwill and co-operation". (Cohen *et al*., 2000, p. 54). Efficiency at this stage encouraged confidence and shows seriousness about the research (Gillham, 2005). While I may have known many of the stakeholders it gave me an opportunity to create a relationship prior to commencement of the interview.

3.5.3.2 Focusing the interview questions.

To ensure that interviews relate to the research questions and objectives for data collection, planning is needed (Anderson, 1998). Therefore, with the assistance of Spolsky's Language Policy Model which guided the main three

research questions, sub questions were added, and an interview guide or schedule was developed (Bryman, 2004); (see Appendix K). Allowing for flexibility and in order to be able to probe for further detail or information it was important not to make the questions too specific (Macintyre, 2000; Bryman, 2004; Gray, 2004). Furthermore, a strategy of identifying and addressing rival explanations for findings was necessary, to add to the trustworthiness of the study (Hammersley, 2007; Yin, 2009). Therefore, questions were designed to answer each of the possible rival explanations; for example, how did stakeholders' negative or positive experience of the Irish language in their own educational or other settings impact on their views of the language today?

The questions outlined in the interview schedule had to be posited without bias (Yin, 2009). Therefore, more 'how' questions were used instead of 'why' questions in order for stakeholders not to feel defensive about their actions (Yin, 2009). For example, "How do you view the significance of the Irish language in relation to Irish identity and Irish citizenship?" Questions about the interviewees' opinions and insights about the topic are a less threatening way of getting answers than the 'why' questions. The interview guide began with a prescriptive list of introductory comments and questions gaining factual or "factsheet information" (Bryman, 2004, p. 442) about the interviewee and setting, which may be relevant later for "contextualising people's answers" (Bryman, 2004, p. 442). Such information included name, age range, gender, educational experiences, number of years working in their role, and their role in the organisation where applicable and their opinions on where they believed they were situated on the CEFR scale in oral, aural, reading and writing skills. When designing the questions, the language that was used had to be understood by the various interviewees with cognisance to the level of education received. Questions were designed to be "as open-ended as possible to gain spontaneous information about attitudes and actions, rather than documents and interviews" (Gilbert, 1993, p. 138). Initial questions were designed not only to elicit information regarding the level of Irish (verbal, reading, aural and written) of the interviewees but also to settle them into the interview environment.

3.5.2.3 Focus group interviews

The group interview data was collected through a semi-structured group interview process consisting of three groups of students (six senior students, six Transition Year students and six junior students[6]) from the school. The focus group is focused in two ways - there was a tightly defined topic for discussion i.e. the content focus and a specifically defined group of individuals are selected. (Gillham, 2005). While it is recommended to work with a group of six to ten, there may be reasons to have smaller or slightly larger groups (Morgan, 1997). Less than six, however, may produce thin quality in terms of the range of topics that emerge. I invited six students per group to the interview and I acted as the group facilitator. Selecting this method of data collection is two-fold. At first the group dynamic of a focus group inevitably provokes an interesting debate but also it elevates any concerns in relation to ethical issues when interviewing minors. However, by creating an atmosphere congenial to debate, a practice I use every day in the classroom, I envisaged that students would debate the issues concerned in a more open manner than they may in a one-to-one interview.

The focus group interviews were successful insofar as all participated when prompted by the researcher. Disagreements took place on some of the ideas forwarded by individuals, but the answers were notably shorter from the junior students and the researcher had to probe often to elicit information on different aspects of the research. Often it was noted when probed that the junior students were more likely to reply with 'I don't know' rather than reflecting on the question. The senior group were able to develop their answers to greater depth.

[6] Senior students are students in 5th and 6th Year ranging from 17 – 19 years of age.
Transition Year students are students in their 4th year ranging from 15-16 years of age.
Junior students are student in 1st, 2nd and 3rd Year ranging from 12-15 years of age.

3.5.2.4 Interviewing

Prior to the interviewing participants were asked to read and self-report (by ticking relevant boxed on a handout given) on their level of Irish in the four major linguistic skills which are aural, oral, written and reading (See Appendix K). That gave participants an opportunity to reflect about their personal experiences before focusing on their present views on the Irish language and on electing their present language opinions. Prior to the interview participants were given a brochure about the study.

With ethical and practical agreements in place, the data collection was undertaken taking each group of stakeholders in order. A member of senior management was the first person to be interviewed. This was followed by the Transition Year focus group, Senior students and then Junior students. Then teachers, followed by ancillary staff were interviewed. One staff member was concerned about what other teachers of Irish would think of such an endeavour and as a result, a teacher of Irish was added to the interview schedule. Focus group interviews took place on Wednesday morning when all students had a pastoral care class and permission was given by their teachers for them to be absent from this class. Finally, after much persuasion and as explained above, the parents were interviewed. Only two parents were interviewed in the school while the other four were interviewed, at their request, either at my home, in a café where I secured a quiet room early one morning while the remaining two asked to be interviewed in their offices at their place of work. Interviewing where the participant felt most comfortable was important as you could sense a level of ease, as I, as researcher was a visitor in their space. Data collection commenced in September 2017, with the last interviews completed in May 2018 which spans the Irish school year.

3.5.2.5 Documentary evidence

A unique strength of the case study lies in its ability to deal with a variety of evidence, for example documents and interviews (Yin, 2009). While interviews were used as the main source of data in this study, the use of other products and processes were used to corroborate findings of interviews (Yin, 2009), - observational diary, photographic evidence and documentary evidence and thus provided triangulation of evidence by data type (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This evidence was an outcome of the interviews and not an explicit exploration of documentary data. Further triangulation by data source was provided between stakeholders arising from their various roles and views, thus adding to the validity of the research (Yin, 2003). By consciously engaging in triangulation that is, collecting and double-checking findings from various sources throughout the data collection, the verification process was built in (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Documentation forwarded by the organisation included staff meeting notes for the previous three years, school prospectus for the previous year and the new prospectus for the following year, headed notepaper, pamphlets and copies of the annual school magazine issued by students in May. What was sought were articles, words or phrases in the Irish language and how they were used or if any reference was made about the language. Such evidence would give some insight as to how the Irish language was used in the school and would indicate a certain ideology regarding Irish in the school environment.

3.5.2.6 Photographic evidence.

Qualitative social research emphasizes on an in-depth understanding of meanings and interpretations of gathered data through the use of rich contextual information on social phenomena (Power, 2002). Photographic evidence from the fieldwork has been used as one format of gathering information in recent years (Horworth *et al*., 2005; Holm, 2008). According to Harper (2002, p. 13), “images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words; exchanges based on words alone utilize less

of the brain's capacity than do exchanges in which the brain is processing images as well as words". For Donaldson (2001, p. 176), "it is time to reclaim the lost art of using photographs to conduct research and disseminate results". To analyse how language was used in the visual landscape of the school under investigation permission was granted by the Principal that allowed me to take photographs (188 in total) in classrooms, corridors and offices in the school, when the school was closed to the public. The aim was to investigate where the Irish language was being used in the environment.

When the photographs were taken, they were copied into *NVivo 12* software package. A comment recorded the room number and/or area where a print environment existed and thoughts and reflections of what the researcher had witnessed. (Appendix L). It was apparent that the Irish langauge could have been used in the school visual environment that would scaffold the learning process in the Irish language classroom.

3.6 Data Analysis

Being aware that "the strengths of qualitative data rest very centrally on the competence with which their analysis is carried out" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 10), I therefore, had to employ a rigorous, robust, transparent and systematic approach to data analysis (Robson, 2002; Bryman, 2004). Rigorous in that the analysis is done thoroughly and carefully, so that it has demonstrability, reliability and validity (Weitzman, 2003). Robust, transparent and systematic in that every step of the research logistics (from design of study, sampling, data acquisition and analysis to results and conclusion) must be validated if it is transparent or systematic enough. In this manner, both the research process and result can be assured of high rigor and robustness (Mayrick, 2006). Indeed, among the main concerns were that the data collection and analysis methods would ensure transparency and validity of my findings. Research transparency has three dimensions: data, analytic, and production transparency. Academic discourse relies on the obligation of scholars to reveal to everyone the data, theory and methodology on which their conclusions rest (Moravcsik, 2014). Therefore, reliability referred to the

stability of findings, whereas validity, on the other hand, represents the truthfulness of findings (Altheide & Johnson, 1997). This was of concern as I am researching my own organisation on a topic which I have worked with for over thirty years. With this in mind and having studied the various data collection and analytical methods I adopted the analytical strategy derived from Smith (2008), who drew on the work of Husserl (1970/1927).

3.6.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

The researcher is a senior member of staff in the organisation being examined and is also a teacher of the Irish language, the phenomena under investigation. This empirical context (Bassey, 1999), localised boundary of space and 'proximity to the organisation was fraught with vulnerabilities and there was a need for a robust transparent method of data analysis. IPA (Smith, 2008), a qualitative research approach, offered this robustness as it involves detailed examination of the participant's lifeworld, exploring personal perceptions of an issue under investigation. IPA has a "theoretical commitment to the person as a cognitive, linguistic, affective and physical being and assumes a chain of connections between peoples' talk and their thinking and emotional state" (Smith and Osborn, 2007, p. 54). This interpretive data analysis method has two primary aims: to look in detail at how someone makes sense of life experience, and to give detailed interpretation of the account to understand the experience. It takes great care of each case, offering detailed and nuanced analysis, valuing each case in its own merits before moving to the general cross-case analysis for convergence and divergence between cases (Smith *et al*, 2009). As an inside researcher this thorough investigation was paramount so that any researcher bias would be reduced and indeed eliminated.

According to Smith (2008, p. 40);

> "Successful analyses require the systemic application of ideas, and methodical rigour; but they also require imagination, playfulness, and a combination of reflective, critical and conceptual thinking".

According to Smith and Osborn (2008, p. 41);

> "It produces an account of lived experience in its own terms, rather than one prescribed by pre-existing theoretical preconceptions and it recognises that this is an interpretative endeavour as humans are sense-making organisms".

It has three primary theoretical underpinnings. In this research the researcher has no preconceived notion of what the outcomes of the data analysis will be. Therefore, the inductive approach (see Footnote 2) to data analysis takes the researcher on a voyage of discovery and research outcomes are, as a result, not broad generalisations but contextual findings. Indeed, qualitative researchers tend to speak of 'transferability' (from context to context**)** rather than generalisability. Without doubt one of the main arguments against the use of a case study is in justifying a generalization from a sample of one. Yin (1994, p. 9), himself, raises others "opposition to case studies on the basis of lack of rigour" or "being able to provide little basis for scientific generalisation" (Yin, 1994, p. 10). However, I believe that the IPA approach, which thoroughly analyses data each interview at a time before moving on to the next, will assist with issues of rigour. Despite arguments, case studies, conducted in its natural context, allows the researcher to put forward an interpretation which can be used to infer a possible next direction even if the method of generalisation does not follow that as used by standard surveys (Yin, 1994, p. 31). Under these conditions, what Yin (1994) calls "analytic generalisation" is acceptable. This type of generalisation is concerned more with the interaction of factors and events and explained by Nisbett and Ross (1980, p. 5) by stating that "sometimes it is only by taking a practical instance that we can obtain a full picture". A good study may not necessarily lead to a new generalization but, according to Stake (1993, p. 8) is likely to add credence to existing generalisations. Although there are many researchers who adhere to this approach (Campbell, 1975; Flyvberg, 2001; Vaughan, 1992), as being acceptable provided that due process is given to the emphasis on interpretation, such generalisations, according to Stake (1993, p. 12) should always "be made with a *caveat* stating its limitations" as the data is interpreted.

IPA recognises that this is an interpretative endeavour because humans are sense-making organisms. In IPA, therefore, the researcher aims to make sense of the participant who is trying to make sense of their own experiences using memory and language - a double hermeneutic[7] (Smyth *et al*., 2011; Smith & Osborn, 2088). Finally, IPA is idiographic in its commitment to examining the detailed experience of each case in turn, prior to the move to more general claims. This also is what will reinforce validity concerns as this is a single case study, cautioned by Yin (2004), but with intense scrutiny of each case in turn, line by line, it will assist the researcher in finding the participant's voice and not of the researcher. By taking the IPA approach to a single case, carefully identifying claims and concerns, and the focused description of a 'phenomenological core' in the analysis, can be very valuable and revealing (Smith, 2008, p. 159). A detailed examination of each case will assist with any concerns of invalidity. "Threats to validity and reliability cannot be erased but attention to validity and reliability throughout the study can lessen concerns of invalidity" (Cohen *et al*., 2000, p. 106). By producing authenticated evidence, one has satisfactorily demonstrated the internal validity of the researchers claim to knowledge (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). By getting other people to agree that one's claims are valid, increases a studies credibility. The methodological rigour and internal logic of this study demonstrates its validity.

Furthermore, the data was shared with a critical friend who was a graduate of the University of Leeds with a Masters of Education and who was a teacher of Irish in a rural post-primary school in another region of the west of Ireland. He read the data and consensus was agreed on emerging themes in the data.

This study aims to provide a vivid examination of the role the Irish language has in stakeholders' lives and ascertained their views on how the language can best be promoted.

[7] A double hermeneutic in that the participants are trying to make sense of their world and the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world.

Regarding IPA there is no one definitive method of data analysis involved, rather it adopts flexible strategies towards analytic development. Common processes in IPA move from the particular (idiographic) to the shared, and from the descriptive to the interpretative (hermeneutic).

While qualitative research is not given to mathematical abstractions, it is nonetheless systematic in its approach to data collection and analysis. Most data from this research was collected through interviews allowing participants to articulate their perceptions and experiences freely and spontaneously. Analysis of such data is not grouped according to pre-defined categories, rather salient categories of meaning and relationships between categories are derived from the data itself through a process of inductive reasoning known as coding. The IPA approach offers the means whereby the researcher may access and analyse these articulated perspectives so that they may be integrated in a model that seeks to explain the social processes under study. This approach involves breaking down the data into discrete segments or 'units of meaning' (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) and coding them to categories. Categories arising from this method generally take two forms: those that are derived from the participants' customs and language, and those that the researcher identifies as significant to the project's focus-of-inquiry; the goal of the former "is to reconstruct the categories used by subjects to conceptualise their own experiences and world view" (Creswell *et al.,* 2003, cited in Pelet *et al.,* 2016), the goal of the latter is to assist the researcher in developing theoretical insights through developing themes that illuminate the social processes operative in the site under study; thus, the analytical process stimulates thinking that leads to both descriptive and explanatory categories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 334-342).

For the purpose of this research a qualitative data analysis software, *NVivo 12* was used. In doing so the researcher did not capitulate the hermeneutic task to the logic of a computer. The computer was used as a tool for efficiency and not as a tool which in and of itself conducts analysis and draws conclusions. Qualitative researchers "want tools which support analysis but leave the analyst firmly in charge" (Fielding & Lee, 1998, p.

167). Importantly, such software also serves as a tool for transparency. Arguably, the production of an audit trail is one of the important criteria on which the trustworthiness and plausibility of a study can be established. The qualitative analysis software logs data movements and coding patterns, assisting with the mapping of conceptual categories and thought progression and renders all stages of the analytical process traceable. This facilitates the researcher in producing a more detailed and comprehensive audit trail than manual mapping of this complicated process can allow.

3.6.2 Phases and Steps Taken in the Analytical Process

Eight discrete cycles of analyses were conducted across the process of data analysis.

Phase 1: *Reading and Initial Noting* involved transcribing, reading and re-reading the interview data and noting down initial ideas. It further involved importing the transcripts and related notes and observations into a data management tool known as *NVivo* (NVivo qualitative data analysis software, 2018).

Phase 2: *Open Coding* involved broad participant-driven initial coding of the interviews to deconstruct the data from its original chronology into initial non-hierarchical general codes. These codes, containing “units of meaning” coded from the interview scripts, were assigned clear names and definitions that would serve as subthemes and themes as the coding process progressed (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

IPA analytical focus (Smith *et al*., 2009) advises complete immersion in the original data (interview transcripts) and initial noting. As an in-situ researcher, who has worked in the organisation under study for over 20 years, as a native speaker of Irish and as teacher of the Irish language for 31 years the IPA analythical focus provided a framework for complete immersion in the original data and initial noting which in turn assisted the research to control and alleviate any bias he may have had. Initial noting examines language use and semantic content ‘on a very exploratory level’

(Smith *et al*., 2009, p. 83) and the ways the participant uses language to address issues relevant to the research questions.

Using *NVivo 12* software phase 1 and 2 are integrated. In phase 2 the participant's own words are used, as far as possible, to summarise the sense or meaning that he/she is trying to convey about a specific experience from the transcript. Open codes ('nodes' in *NVivo*) are created for the participant's transcript. Codes aim to make a first pass at reducing the original data to descriptive phrases and notes. This is an iterative process – going through each transcript several times to code and re-code and to add comments, both interrogative and reflexive as follows:

- Code Names capture the summary overall description of the content
- Rich descriptive comments to provide coding transparency are included in the Code Description.
- A journal captures reflexive and conceptual comments arising from the interview.

Phase 3: *Categorisation of Codes* involves re-ordering codes identified in phase 2 into categories of codes by grouping related codes under these categories and organising them into a framework that made sense to further the analysis of the data set and address the research questions. This phase also included distilling, re-naming and merging of categories to ensure that names and definitions accurately reflected the coded content. Themes should be "a synergistic process of description and interpretation" (Smith *et al*., 2009, p. 92), reflecting both the participant's original words and thoughts and the researcher's interpretation – 'capturing an understanding'.

This data reduction using *NVivo* is done by creating a new 'Category' folder. The participant's transcripts hold a copy of the set of open codes, so leaving the original open codes folder of the participants intact. Each code in the category folder is reviewed, codes recorded into broader categories (codes are added to other codes either as parent or, more usually as child codes), merged, and re-named, ensuring that new names accurately reflect coded content to allow a more in-depth understanding of the participant's lifeworld.

Phase 4: *Coding On* involved breaking down the now restructured categories into subordinate categories to offer more in-depth understanding of the highly qualitative aspects under scrutiny and to consider divergent views, negative cases, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours coded to these categories so as to glean clearer insights into the meanings embedded therein.

NVivo refer to this as Category development and it employs IPA strategies to create superordinate themes for clustering of codes. The first step is to consider how categories may be linked or reduced further into emergent themes. New names are created for category themes that reflect both the descriptive and the interpretative to create 'superordinate' themes. For example, fear of talking, afraid of expressing self, and bashful about trying to talk may all be clustered under one theme, e.g. 'attitudes to speaking the language'. The aim is to reduce the original data down to between three and six themes that are relevant to the research question: consolidating codes into a more abstract and conceptual map of a final framework of nodes.

All the previous steps were repeated for each participant without referencing other transcripts. IPA's project is a commitment to idiographic[8] analysis, focusing on individual cases or events allows ideas to be bracketed from one case to the next. Bracketing as used by Smith *et al*. (2009) simply means to allow new structures to emerge with each case yet being aware that the 'fore-structures' (hermeneutics) have inevitably changed and have been influenced by what was previously found.

With *NVivo* software, each time a new transcript is created a new open codes folder is created in which to store the new codes created for each participant's transcripts separate from other transcripts. Each transcript is therefore treated as a new analysis (i.e. corresponding to Steps 1-4) as far as possible bracketing out references to codes in other transcripts.

Phase 5: *Data Reduction* involves consolidating codes from preceding cycles into more abstract, philosophical and literature-based superordinate themes thereby creating a final framework to form the basis of the write-up.

[8]An Idiographic approach tends to include qualitative data, investigating individuals in a personal and detailed way.

These final themes were placed in a matrix comparing each stakeholder category, for example, to facilitate both ‘in-case’ and ‘cross-case’ analysis. Reading the matrix down revealed the extent to which themes and sub-themes impacted on any individual stakeholder while reading across the matrix allowed for comparing the extent to which themes were shared across stakeholder participating in the research.

Phase 6: Involved writing analytical memos against the higher-level themes to accurately summarise the content of each category and its codes and propose empirical findings against such categories. These memos considered 5 key areas:

- The content of the cluster of codes on which it is reporting (what was said).
- The coding patterns where relevant (levels of coding for example although this could be used to identify exceptional cases as well as shared experiences).
- Considering background information recorded against participants and considering any patterns that may exist in relation to participants’ profiles (who said it)
- Situating the code(s) in the storyboard – meaning considering the relatedness of themes to each other, and their importance in terms of the research questions, and
- Sequencing disparate codes and clusters of codes into a story or narrative which is structured and can be expressed in the form of a coherent and cohesive findings chapter.

Considering primary sources in the context of relationships with the literature as well as identifying gaps in the literature

Using *NVivo* provides a tool to enable the researcher to look at themes across participants to detect patterns. Looking for connections, do themes from one case illuminate another? Which themes are the most potent? This process can result in moving towards a more theoretical level of analysis as individual themes or superordinate themes may also reflect higher order concepts shared by all cases. The analysis so far has gone from the part to

the whole. This is now reversed and the whole looked at in terms of each part. Also, recurrence of themes across cases is considered. For a superordinate theme to be classed as recurrent it must be present in at least half of cases and best case across all participant interviews (see Appendix M).

Phase 7: This phase involved testing, validating and revising analytical memos to self-audit proposed findings by seeking evidence in the data beyond textual quotes to support the stated findings and seeking to expand on deeper meanings embedded in the data. This process involves interrogation of data and allows the researcher to consider elements beyond the theme itself, drawing on relationships across and between themes and cross tabulation with demographics, observations and literature. This phase resulted in evidence-based findings as each finding had to be validated by being rooted in the data itself and relied on the creation of reports from the data to substantiate findings.

Phase 8: Involved synthesising analytical memos into a coherent, cohesive and well supported outcome statement or findings chapter offering a descriptive account of the study participants' views and perceptions of the Irish language and insights into possible interventions that would support a broader use of the language in school.

In the design of the data analysis steps, consideration was given to the aim of the study and its underlying philosophical foundation. King (2004) states that tensions exist "between the need to be open to the data and the need to impose some shape and structure on the analytical process" (King, 2004, p. 267). The objective was to design and undertake a systematic and disciplined data analysis process that encouraged completeness and impartiality (Lillis, 1999), while also recognising the complexity of the data under review and the interpretative nature of the study.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter detailed the philosophical underpinnings, approach, methods and analytical processes of the research study. The methodology chosen must be suitable to answer the three research questions about their knowledge of the language, their beliefs and attitudes towards the language, and their perceptions as to what interventions they presume may work in incorporating a broader use of the Irish language in the school. As a result, it was necessary to use qualitative methods, semi-structured interviews, observational data (which included photographic evidence), and documentary evidence. This also facilitated alignment between the epistemological, ontological and research approaches, in that they are subjective, and this research was looking at participants' subjective views of the Irish language and the possibility of broadening its use in the school environment. The single case study, with the different modes of data collection, provides evidence to aid transferability or replication of findings. This chapter explained how data was collected to generate evidence to address the research questions. This material and the responses to research questions are addressed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the analysis of the data collected from fourteen individual interviews, three focus groups interviews (six students in each group), an observational diary and photographical evidence collected from September 2017 – May 2018 and included school documentation at the researcher's disposal. The data from the different research methodologies will be descriptive and will facilitate an exploration of any patterns or themes emerging from the responses of stakeholders interviewed.

The aim of the chapter is to systematically answer three research questions outlined in Chapter 1 that explores the prospects and possibilities of broadening the use of the Irish language in an English-medium post-primary school. The exploratory case study aimed to ascertain the ability and willingness of different stakeholders within the organisation (teachers, students, ancillary staff and parents) to cooperate with a proposed intervention that would broaden Irish language usage in the school community. It therefore explores what knowledge stakeholders have of the Irish language, what their language ideologies are, and how their perceptions of a language intervention could be managed in the organisation. This chapter uses Spolsky's language policy model as a framework (Spolsky, 2004) and is accordingly divided into three sections. Firstly, the findings in relation to the knowledge participants have of the four language skills are ascertained. Incorporated also is an investigation of where the language was learned and the experiences of learning, which in turn affects the level to which the language was learned.

The second part of the chapter outlines the attitudes and beliefs of stakeholders towards the Irish language. Findings on how stakeholders view language and language learning are outlined before looking at what their attitudes and feelings are towards the Irish language focusing on how they view the language in their lives. The second section concludes with an account of the attitudes and beliefs regarding Irish language acquisition with

a focus on how Irish is taught and on links and relationship between language and identity and between culture and heritage.
The third part of the chapter investigates what knowledge and views stakeholders have of Government initiatives to promote language. The aim was to ascertain their interest and willingness to learn the language and the impact of Government policies and initiatives have had on their use and knowledge of Irish. The views stakeholders share on what interventions they believed would be effective in implementing a policy on broadening the use of Irish in this English--medium post-primary school are recorded.

4.2 Language knowledge, acquisition and usage

4.2.1 Perceptions of language proficiency

For effective interpersonal communication, necessary for the success of the endeavour proposed in this study, it calls for knowledge of some of the four skills of language learning. This set of four capabilities are usually acquired in first language learning, in the order of listening or aural competencies, followed by speaking, then reading, and finally, writing. However, in second language acquisition "it is now widely recognised that … input, interaction and output are three essential compositing elements in L2 acquisition" (Zhang, 2009, p. 91). "In language learning input is the language data which the learner is exposed to*"* (Zhang, 2009, p. 91) – using their aural skills and reading skills. Output on the other hand is "the language a learner produces" (Zhang, 2009, p. 93), what a learner speaks or writes. To give some indication of participants' competency in the four language skills all interviewees were asked, prior to the interview, to read and reflect on Common European Framework for Reference (CEFR) for languages (Appendix J). They then indicated their perceived competencies, by ticking which comments on the framework best described their level in the four main linguistic skills.

4.2.1.1 Aural skills:

As is seen in Appendix J, only two individuals (from 14 individual interviewees and 18 students involved in the three focus groups) professed a

high aural competency, while two said they understood no Irish at all when it is spoken. Others expressed a low to average competency (A1 to C1 on the CEFR). Most comments would indicate just basic comprehension skills claiming to be only *"… able to pick out a few words here and there"* (Teacher 2: M: A2), where one could *"pick up phrases and words but …would [not be] confident that [he] would understand everything that was being said"* (Management 1: M: A1). Students' statements ranged from being able to *"understand it better than speak it"* (Student J1: M: A1) to *"not able to understand it when spoken to me"* (Student J2: M: A2). Findings indicate that Irish was a language you did *"not have to speak, write or read but [you] could not ignore hearing it as it is often spoken in … company"* (Management 1: M: A2) and this makes people more aware of their Irish aural skills. Therefore, it was evident that participants were *"more experience listening to it [Irish] than speaking it"* (Teacher 3: M: B2).

Contextual factors that impact on aural competencies depended on *"who was speaking and what they were talking about"* (Ancillary 1: M: A2) which referred to the speaker's clarity and the topic they were discussing. It depended on if a person knew what topic was being discussed then they *"can follow a lot of what is being spoken about"* (Ancillary 1: M: A2) or if they have *"a gist of what the conversation is about"* (Parent 4: F: A1). It was easier to *"zone in"* (Teacher 4: F: A1) if the topic being spoken about was of interest. What was also of importance was *"gestures and the body-language [used and] you would pick up some of it [Irish]"* (Parent 2: M: A1).

Comprehension also depended on *"which dialect, of the three major dialects were being used"* claiming what this interviewee had *"book Irish"* (Parent 2: M: A1). There were issues with the speed at which native speakers speak (Parent 2: M: A1; Teacher 1: M: B1; Teacher 5: F: B1) making it difficult for learners to comprehend.

Irish teachers and the Irish Television Station (TG4) appeared to be the two main sources of aural language and subtitles were mentioned as an aid to aural comprehension on the Irish television service and a method of learning some vocabulary (Parent 3: M: N/A).

4.2.1.2 Reading skills.

Students perceived reading to be their strongest skill due to the emphasis on reading in the curriculum. For example, Student J5: F: B2 ranked her linguistic ability.*"* Reading was regarded *"better …than speaking or understanding it"* (Student J1: M: A1). Most students in the focus groups spoke in a neutral tone about their reading skills, describing it as *"okay only"* (Student Y6: F: B1) or "*okay*" (Student Y5: F: B1) despite the emphasis on the skill in their curriculum. They did not read Irish material other than those prescribed in the Irish syllabus.

For adults interviewed there were no requirements for them to read once they had left the education system and therefore, were not unsure of their Irish reading abilities. They were *"not so sure if [they could] can read it or not"* (Ancillary 1: M: A2). The uncertainty was palpable in where interviewees stated that "would understand some of [the] read sometimes but not that much" (Parent 4: F: A1). Another admitted that he would

> *"...struggle a lot. Reading day-to-day items, there would probably be a lot of words [he] would get stuck on. So [he] would have to really understand as many words as [he] could and leapfrog the ones [he] did not understand"* (Teacher 1: M: B1).

Moreover, he added that he *"would probably interpret the broader sense of the article"* (Teacher1: M: B1). This supports census data findings that claim Irish language abilities decline soon after leaving the education system (CSO, 2017).

Contact with native speakers had a positive impact on the linguistic and Irish reading skills of participants. Teacher 3: M: B2 who was affiliated to the Donegal *Gaeltacht*, Teacher 6: F: C2 who lived in the Conamara *Gaeltacht*, but not a native speaker, and a colleague who lives in the Mayo Gaeltacht all professed a stronger command of reading Irish than other participants. Students and the Irish language teacher interviewed said they read Irish every day in the classroom. However, due to predominance of English and the absence of Irish printed newspaper, there is no opportunity or, no requirement to read any other Irish scripts. Only Parent 1: M: B1 read the weekly Irish article in the *Irish Times* newspaper *"if it was of interest"* to him.

Findings indicate that reading for adults was restricted to bilingual road signs, bilingual signage in public buildings and occasional Irish posters. He also added that he comprehended phrases like *"… 'isteach' [in] and things like that, basic stuff [but] … if the sentence was too long, I would not be able to understand it"* (Parent 1: M: B1). Discussions with a history teacher revealed her interest in the Irish language stems from the knowledge on Irish place names. Having an interest in words and etymology also was of assistance with reading Irish (Teacher 2: M: A2). This teacher had a love of Irish and he loved the challenge listening and reading the Irish language. He *"loves 'the challenge' of figuring out the meaning of place names for example."* He continues that he *"would figure it [place names and signposts] out through etymology … Cill [church], 'Baile' [town], that sort of thing but newspaper in Irish … would not be fit for that sort of thing"* (Teacher 2: M: A2).

4.2.1.3 Oral skills

Findings indicated that participants' oral skills were the weakest of the linguistic skills (Appendix J). Comments expressed included, *"talking would be the worst … [but] not too bad speaking Irish when [he] had to in class*" (Student J2: M: A2) or that they did *"not really speak Irish*" (Student J1: M: A1). When placing their linguistic skills in order Student J5: F: B2 placed oral skills worse *"reading and then understand it [Irish] but could not really speak it."* Expressions were similar from others who claimed, *"reading would be the best but talking would be the worst"* (Student J2: M: A2).

Both adults and students were critical of the education system for not placing sufficient focus on oral Irish skills. Students stated that they had to *"… read articles and write essays and letters but we don't have to speak it in class so therefore outside the classroom we don't have enough language to use with people"* (Student J4: F: A2). Others believed that *"in class if we did more speaking and less reading and writing … then we might be able to speak it"* (Student S4: F: B2). Finding showed that:

> *"If it was taught better in the school … I think it [Irish] will survive but there needs to be more talking rather than writing. More chatting and*

having fun speaking to others in Irish. I would love to be able to speak it" (Student S1: M: A2)

or

"In class there should be more talking and less writing" (Student Y4: F: A1). Apparently, students *"don't do any practice on … [oral Irish] in class*" (Student S5: F: B2) because "*in class …we are usually just writing because there is no exam in speaking it until our Leaving Certificate*" (Student Y5: F: B1). Teacher 2: M: A2 explains that *"…verbal language is average to below average. I have not used it since I left school. If I was among Gaeilgeoir's [Irish speakers] I would be lost.*" This lack of opportunity was also a hindrance to those with a good level of Irish and frustration ensued as it is difficult to find "*anyone who would want to communicate with me because I would be able to speak to them*" (Teacher 3: M: B2). The majority "*would not be able to hold a conversation in Irish now but [if they had to they] probably would be better"* (Management 1: M: A1).

As there is requirement to use Irish every day, there were some participants who were unsure if they could speak it or not. Student Y1: M: A1 was "*no good speaking it*" adding *"I don't think I can speak it – I really don't try much*." Adult respondents revealed the same sentiment. One "*did not think*" he could speak Irish (Ancillary 1: M: A2) and another did not "*think [he] could but [he has] the 'cúpla focal' but that is it*" (Parent 1: M: B1) which indicates the uncertainty of his oral Irish skills.

4.2.1.4 Writing skills

Students said that this was the skill that they practiced the most and it is explanatory insofar as most of their examinations, both house examinations and state examinations are written papers. Students "*would learn it [Irish] and … then would write it out*" (Student Y6: F: B1). The emphasis on writing is viewed as tedious and futile and it is evident that the students "*are just writing and it is boring. You don't learn from that*" (Student J5: F: B2). Adult respondents claimed that writing skills were the less used linguistic skill since they left the education system. For one interviewee it had been "*18 years … since [he] last tried to write it [Irish] bar [his] name*" (Ancillary 1: M: A2). The only indication that writing skills were required was when helping

students or their own families with homework (Ancillary 1: M: A2), for example "*doing the homework with [his] 11 years old who is in primary school*" (Parent 1: M: B1). Amongst the teachers interviewed their lack of confidence, if requested to include written Irish on posters and displays was clear. No one used Irish writing to communicate, with one small exception which was recorded in the observational diary.

4.2.2 Sites where Irish language was acquired

In this section interviewees were asked where they had acquired the Irish language. Unsurprisingly, the education system was the source of most sites (30 out of 32). One immigrant did not learn any Irish and a parent said she had learned some at home before coming to school. Their experiences varied depending on teachers and on schools and on attitude to Irish in the home.

4.2.2.1 Primary school

Primary school was mentioned by many respondents as their first encounter with Irish. One interview stated that a;

> "*good grounding of it [Irish] at primary school …stood for me through secondary school [and] as there was a "huge" emphasis placed on conversation and on role play in class … [he] found [Irish] an extremely easy transition [from primary to post-primary] and …found that there was nothing new up to Junior Certificate - just a few new words*" (Teacher 1: M: B1).

The amount of time spent on Irish each day, the methodologies used, and the character of the teacher were all factors that enhanced the learning experience for students at primary school. Not having a good experience of Irish in primary school may have been "*a lost opportunity*" (Ancillary 1: M: A2), or a bad experience in primary school can impact negatively (Parent 1: M: B1) who explained that the teacher did not place emphasis on Irish, and that "*may have caused [him] to struggle [with Irish] in post-primary school*." Some students recalled having "*fun*" with Irish in primary school (Student 1:

M: A2; Student Y5: F: B1) while there were those who just found it boring (Student J1: M: A1; Student Y1: M: A1).

4.2.2.2 Post-primary school

Comments about the Irish language in post–primary school was focused on examinations and teachers of the language. Having "*an absolutely passionate Irish teacher in Leaving Certificate*" (Teacher 5: F: B1) and having "*a lovely Irish teacher … it was a lovely experience*" (Teacher 6: F: C2) helped in acquiring an appreciation for the language and assisted greatly in passing Irish examinations. One interviewee claimed that her achievement in passing Irish in her Leaving Certificate was the result of a new Irish language teacher in her final year at post-primary school (Teacher 4: F: A1). Prior to this "*no teacher had succeeded to ignite a love of the Irish language*" for her. Bad experiences of learning Irish, when it was "*drummed into us*" (Parent 2: M: A1) did not instil any strong desire to learn any more of the language than what he already had.

4.2.2.3 Third level experience of Irish

Prior to 2000, to qualify as a post-primary teacher all teachers were required to pass an Irish examination called '*An Ceard Teastas'* (the Vocational Certificate) (DES circular 21/00). The aim was that all teachers could teach their respective subject through Irish if required. To qualify teachers "*needed an X amount of Irish at an X standard which was rote learned*" (Teacher 2: M: A2). However, teachers were critical of this examination. To pass this exam some teachers, having attended lectures in college, also went on summer courses but the practice was described by one participant as "*a means to an end*" (Management 1: M: A1). The same individual never used it in his career since and said he would not be able to teach Engineering through Irish if required. This addition to their qualification was seen as a workload which they "*had now lost all [of the Irish learned] because [she] had never used Irish since*" (Teacher 5: F: B1). The Irish teacher (Teacher 6: F: C2) was critical also of third level colleges who were not focusing on the oral Irish standard of their Irish teaching graduates and found that "*newly*

qualified teachers, and students from the different colleges, who have come to the school of late are weak speaking Irish." As part of *Garda* (police) training Irish is taught but like that of the teachers, the emphasis was on rote learning "*in the legal context*" but it did not teach how to converse comfortably (Parent 6: F: A2). She has not used any Irish since qualifying and has lost what she had learned.

4.2.2.4 Summer colleges

Only three members of the focus groups had attended summer college course in the *Gaeltacht*. One reason given was the cost was prohibitive (Student Y4: F: A1). The two teachers had attended summer colleges to assist them with study for the Irish qualification (*An Ceard Teastas*) and one parent had attended a course when he was a post-primary student. On these courses there was a "*no nonsense" policy to speaking English and therefore you would not get away with speaking English, so you had to learn it [Irish]"* (Parent 1: M: B1). Any progress made by attendees of summer colleges seemed to be short lived and functioned only for examination purposes. The Principal, who attended a course while in third level education, admitted that it "*did not prepare him to teach through Irish or to converse [in Irish*]" (Management 1: M: A2).

4.2.2.5 Home

Comments made about Irish language use in the home indicated that there was little emphasis on the Irish language in the home. Comments informed the research that they "*never use Irish at home*" (Student Y4: F: A1; Student Y1: M: A1; Parent 4: F: A1), to "*rarely use Irish*" (Student S6: F: B1; Student S5: F: B2; Ancillary 1: M: A2; Teacher 4: F: A1). Only two (Teacher 1: M: B1; Teacher 6: F: C2) participants recalled a broad use of the language or a bilingual approach to language in their homes which was due to the former being married to an Irish teacher whose family was from the *Gaeltacht* and the latter being an Irish teacher herself. Most houses only used a few Irish words or a few simple phrases occasionally for light-hearted, non-serious encounters. The most time Irish was used in the home was when there was homework being done in Irish and the students needed assistance.

However, a positive attitude to the language in the home did not always lead from those who were reared in households where the language was used a lot (Parent 5: F: B1). This parent heard a lot of Irish from her parents growing up and her mother stills uses a lot of Irish with her family, but this parent believed that to lose Irish "… *would be a shame, but it would not be a disaster*" (Parent 5: F: B1).

4.2.2.6 Irish in the community

Evidence of Irish being spoken in the community was scant. No interviewee lived in a *Gaeltacht* area and one note in the observational diary referred to a colleague living in a *Gaeltacht* area where she was uncomfortable as a non-native speaker, speaking to the native speakers. Most participants said that they never or rarely heard Irish spoken in their community (Parent 2: M: A1; Teacher 2: M: A2; Student Y1: M: A1; Student S5: F: B2; Teacher 4: F: A1). Assumptions were made that it was being spoken in GAA clubs, and in *Naíonraí* (all Irish nursery school) in the area (Ancillary 1: M: A2). A parent who lived close to a *Gaeltacht* area said she often "*listens to native speakers talking in the pub or at card games*" (Parent 6: F: A2). Neighbours who were originally from *Gaeltacht* areas impacted on the among of Irish heard when they came to visit, they would "*use a lot of Irish in …. [their] conversation*" (Student S6: F: B1).

Fear of using Irish in a *Gaeltacht* area, when you were not a native speaker, inhibited individuals trying or using it with Irish speakers (Parent 5: F: B1; Parent 1: M: B1). One individual says that to attempt to try to speak French abroad was easier, despite his low level of French, than it was "*to speak Irish in Ireland where you felt embarrassed you did not speak it after all the years in school"* (Parent 1: M: B1). Irish was "*not something you would hear in the community… you would not use it to buy a pint of milk or petrol …and I would rarely use it with friends*" (Teacher 1: M: B1). Fear of using Irish was mentioned by a member of staff as if they were heard speaking Irish or promoting Irish it was feared that people may misinterpret it to mean that you had affiliations with certain republican political.

4.2.3 Views on language acquisition

4.2.3.1 Positive views

Experiences of the difficulties associated with acquiring the Irish language were discussed by respondents. Language acquisition seemed to be easier for the participants if they had a positive attitude when learning the Irish language. Where a love and respect for the language was displayed this instilled a love and fondness for the language, but not always fluency (Teacher 2: M: A2). It was difficult to see how a positive attitude could be fostered towards the language where parents were angry that their child had to learn a "*dead language*", or in a household who could not help their child with Irish (as observed at a parent-teacher meeting and documented in the observational) (see Appendix K).

4.2.3.2 The impact of teachers and teaching on acquisition

The quality of teachers and teaching was a factor that enhanced or inhibited Irish language learning. A good primary school teacher was viewed as one who was *"… fluent in Irish and … would speak a lot of it during other lessons as well… so we heard Irish outside of the Irish lesson … which made it easier … when you came to this school*" (Student Y5: F: B1). There was a belief that "*if it was done right in primary school and every year you were getting better and better*" (Student Y2: M: A2). However, there were times that *"there was not much emphasis placed on it [Irish] in Primary school*" (Student S4: F: B2) or that "*Irish was not used outside of … the hour on the timetable*" (Student Y4: F: A1). Having a motivated teacher in post-primary also "*made a difference to [one teachers] attitude towards Irish and was instrumental in passing [his] examination*" (Teacher 4: F: A1). A teacher *"… can motivate a young person, [can] make them see that they can communicate at some level … spur[s] them on to learn more and more*" (Teacher 4: F: A1). There was a statement saying it *"… would depend on how diligent … how motivating and charismatic the teacher is*" acknowledging that *"it is a difficult thing to do*" (Teacher 4: F: A1).

The quality of teaching and the professionalism or personality of the Irish teacher has an impact on acquisition as indicated by respondents in this study. A teacher who had a professional approach coupled with creating a fun environment was praised. Having a native speaker as a teacher indicated that there was a more natural approach to teaching the language. One comment relayed their experience with "*a very good teacher …. a native speaker [who] … spent longer on Irish*" than the normal timetable allotted, spending "*all morning doing and speaking Irish*" (Student S6: F: B1). There was also mention of a "*lovely native Irish speaker*" described as "*an absolutely passionate Irish teacher in Leaving Certificate*" (Teacher 6: F: C2). Teachers instilled a love of Irish in their students. They gave students

> "… *grá [love] and enthusiasm for the language [which] has stayed with me…. Even if I have not been able to replicate it and I can't speak it… but there is a pride …. I have a pride in my native language"* (Teacher 2: M: A2).

On the other hand, students who experienced boredom in the classroom blamed the teacher saying, "*he was not interested in it [Irish] so it was boring*" (Student J2: M: A2). Students who did not remember much about their past experiences blamed the teacher (Student Y2: M: A2). Another claimed that previous teachers "*did not enthuse*" her and she believed that by secondary school "*it was nearly too late at that stage [to learn Irish*]" (Teacher 4: F: A1). However, teacher also enhanced the learning experience and there was "*good fun because the teacher was great craic* [Fun]" (Student S1: M: A2) or "… *the teacher was good fun – he made it fun… He had a guitar and he sang, and we had fun… [but] I did not learn much … but it was good craic all the same*" (Student Y1: M: A1).

A teacher's mood was also mentioned as an inhibitor or an enhancer of learning:

> "*Some days the teacher comes in and uses games as a way of trying to help us remember things and other times we are just writing, and it is boring. You don't learn from that… it depends on what mood the teacher is in*" (Student Y3: M: A2).

The role of the Irish teacher was viewed as an *"…important job as many students will only experience Irish at school*" (Parent 3: M: N/A). This parent explained that the Irish teacher has a dual role insofar as he/she is a teacher of language and a protector of a cultural artefact, and responsible for maintaining the existence of the Irish language in a community where English was the dominant language.

4.2.3.3 English language dominance and its impact on Irish language acquisition and use

English, as a global language, creates the largest disadvantage for the advancement of the Irish language and for acquisition in the school since;

> *"…we are in an English-speaking school; in an English-speaking area they don't see the value of having to learn Irish. An English-speaking environment at home as well so they do not see the value of Irish. Students who can afford to go to the Gaeltacht during the summer can see that language being used in a natural setting and I think if the students could see that, that it would have a huge benefit. It should be compulsory that they visit the Gaeltacht"* (Teacher 6: F: C2).

The fact that "…*English is everywhere, radio, television, music - you are saturated with it and I think a lot of people think [they] don't need to speak anything else*" (Teacher 1: M: B1). Everyone is able "*to speak English as their first language. Therefore, we don't need to speak in Irish*" (Student S6: F: B1). Interestingly, a Serbian immigrant commented, "*because you Irish [people] have English you don't have to have a second language*" (Parent 3: M: N/A) or as bluntly stated "*I don't have it [Irish] and I don't need it*" (Student Y3: M: A2).

As a result, there is an absence of opportunity to use Irish. Even if they want to speak Irish there "*is no one to speak it to if I wanted to*" (Ancillary 1: M: A2). Another participant, who is twelve years living in Ireland, claimed he "*never met a native Irish speaker*" (Parent 3: M: N/A). The absence of a place to use Irish, in a meaningful context, left participants with a basic level of conversational skills (see 4.2.1.3 discussion on oral skills).

4.2.3.4 The importance of a meaningful context in which to use Irish

Findings from the study clearly points to the importance of having a meaningful context when learning the language. Learners must have a sense of achievement from learning something and if a person likes the language, this spurs one on to learn more. Being good at the language (reflected often in the grades they get in examinations) brought with it a more positive attitude towards the language. This was explained in one interview. "*It was like that for Maths with me. I was useless and therefore I hated the subject*" (Ancillary 1: M: A2). Moreover, one student said, "*because I am good at soccer, I like it and I play a lot of it, but I hate tennis because I am no good at it and I do not play it at all*" (Student Y3: M: A2). This student believes it is the same with Irish, "*if you are good at it you will like it and learn more*" (Student Y3: M: A2). Irish became much more than a subject for one participant who said sports and games gave meaningful context in which to use the Irish language. When she joined an Irish speaking Gaelic Football team, the necessity *"to speak Irish coupled with a love of sport made the language more meaningful*" (Parent 5: F: B1). One interviewee met a lot of native speakers at card games but, while not being confident enough to answer them in Irish, she could understand everything they said (Parent 6: F: A2). However, such exposures to Irish speakers were limited for participants in this study and learning Irish had to have a certain goal, a means to an end.

4.2.3.5 Studying Irish as a means to an end.

However, for a lot of people studying Irish was simply a "*means to an end*" (Management 1: M: A1; Teacher 4: F: A1; Student Y2: M: A2) and a concept alluded to by Teacher 2: M: A2 and Teacher 5: F: B1. Most students "*just do it*" without question and pass their exam (Teacher 6: F: C2). Requiring the language for specific purposes was mentioned by a many student (Student Y4: F: A1; Student J2:M: A2; Student S2: M: A1). Some students "*see Irish as being useful or necessary if they want to teach*" (Teacher 6: F: C2), but otherwise Irish was used "*only … in school for Irish class*" (Student S2: M:

A1) and that "*you don't need to use it in your daily life ... because everyone speaks English*" (Student S6: F: B1).

Interviewees expressed a desire to spend more time speaking Irish in class or regretting that more time was not spent on speaking "*the language in the classroom rather than reading and writing it there might be a different attitude to the Irish language than there is*" (Student S4: F: B2), but, as "*there is no exam in speaking it [Irish] until our Leaving Certificate*" (Student Y5: F: B1) there is no need to practice speaking it until then. How different age groups relayed their experiences of learning Irish was of interest.

4.2.3.6 Language used to describe their experiences

Of interest also was the language used when describing Irish language acquisition. For teenagers interviewed who did not have a positive experience spoke about how "*the teacher made it boring*" (Student Y2: M: A2) or "*the subject was boring"* (Student S2: M: A1). There were complaints about having to learn material "*off by heart*" (Student S: 5: B1). In contrast negative experience by older adults interviewed, both teachers and parents describe their experience of learning the language as it being "*drummed into*" (Teacher 5: F: B1), "*belted into*" (Parent 2: M: A1)" and *"battered into*," (Parent 5: F: B1), experiences that often left a negative impact (Parent 2: M: A1; Parent 6: F: A2). There was a sense that the adult participants were cohered into learning Irish as one member of the ancillary staff explained (recorded in the observational diary (Appendix N) as a child; believing an Irish inspector was hiding behind the walls listening to the students as they walked home from school, she still remembers the fear of walking home and speaking Irish in case the inspector was listening.

4.2.4 Sites where Irish language is used

Investigations on occasions or sites in which the Irish language was used gave an insight into how participants engaged with the language when they had to.

4.2.4.1 Doing Homework

Doing homework at home was mentioned by several respondents of where Irish is used (see discussion in 4.2.1.4 and 4.2.2.5 about the role of homework). The second most common reason to use Irish was to relay messages incognito when abroad in particular.

4.2.4.2 Using Irish so others will not know what you are saying

The next most commonly used time where Irish is used is when one wished a message to remain incognito. Findings in the study found that learning Irish for social use was mentioned only in two contexts. Many referred to being able to use Irish when abroad on holidays (or working) to convey messages incognito or to exhibit pride in your country. Interviewees indicated that "… *when you are away on holidays it is nice to be able to show we have our own language*" (Student J3: M: A1). Basic Irish communication was possible when visiting Spain, (Parent 2: M: A1); France (Parent 1: M: B1); Iceland (Parent 5: F: B1) where Irish was helpful in conveying messages to their friends and families to hide what they were saying from those around them. They found it more comfortable to attempt to speak Irish abroad, where they would not be corrected, and they appeared proud of their ability to converse with their respective families/friends in Irish. The Principal explains why he feels he must use Irish while on holidays, aligning with the idiom "*the nearer the church the further from God"* (Management 1: M: A2). He explains "*here at home we don't need to prove we have a separate identity whereas when away from home, the language becomes an identity marker and a badge to wear*" (Management 1: M: A2). Speaking the language abroad was mentioned by others also (Parent 1: M: B1; Parent 2: M: A1; Parent 5: F: B1).

Irish was used for the same reason in domestic sites where Irish was spoken to "*hide facts from [her] brothers who did not have any Irish*" (Teacher 5: F: B1). Also, there was a sense that it would be "*handy and … it would be nice*

to be able to speak it when you went to them parts [the Gaeltacht]" (Student Y2: M: A2). An immigrant father stated that *"…to go somewhere and start a conversation with an Irish person … it would be good because I am a foreigner who made an effort and [the] foreigner would be better in the eyes of others"* (Parent 3: M: N/A).

This study gave a brief insight as to how the proposed initiative would work.

4.2.4.3 The impact of this project as an example of future endeavours.

Studies (or projects) like this one inspires or remind people to use Irish. This study brought about a change in language practice as more people spoke Irish to the researcher than they did previously when they became aware of the ongoing project. As observed in the researcher's diary, the Principal and the caretaker spoke more Irish to the researcher (see Appendix O). This change of behaviour was noted, and it is of interest here insofar as it highlighted a willingness to conform to such an initiative, if planned carefully. The principal explained that, as a result of the interview on the Irish language, he wished to make the school's headed notepaper bilingual in the future. He demonstrated that he is willing to see the Irish language being used on school documentation which he believed would "*give a better profile to the Irish language"* (Management 1: M: A2). Such small, yet prominent, changes occurred with the slightest of interventions thereby highlighting a willingness to cooperate with broadening the use of Irish.

Prior to the interview a teacher claimed to have no Irish until we started the interview and she was surprised to hear herself "*using words and simple phrases…so therefore it must mean I have some level of Irish and that if I really wanted to that I might be able to learn more*" (Teacher 4: F: A1). A parent had the same experience as a result of the interview. He claimed to have "*only the cúpla focal (few words) but that is it"* (Parent 1: M: B1**)** but on further questioning he admitted that he had "*more than the cúpla focal and that it is laying there but [he does not] get a chance to use it*." There was amble evidence that Irish was not used in the home.

4.2.4.4 Irish use in the home

The ultimate goal of any language revitalisation effort is the self-sustaining intergenerational transfer of language within the home (Wietmarschen, 2012). While such a goal remains outside the remit of this study it is still important to see how the proposed initiative could be forwarded if schools were to bridge the home/school nexus.

As already discussed at 4.2.2.5 above, Irish use in the home of interviewees, while being limited to phrases, basic questions, and orders, is worthy of a mention in this section. Understandably, interviewees, from Serbian, Lithuanian and Polish families showed they did not use any Irish at home. Many respondents claimed to use only basic common phrases, some which were used in their parental home growing up ("*Dún an doras*" [close the door]) (Management 1: M: A1); "*Éistigí*." "*Tar anseo*." [Listen; Come here]. (Teacher 5: F: B1); "*Cá bhfuil mo bhróga*?" [Where are my shoes?]. (Student S5: F: B2; Student Y6: F: B1). Teenagers interviewed commented on parental Irish language skills. While parents did study Irish in school, "*they never spoke it"* (Student S5: F: B2) or "*parents were rubbish at Irish*" (Student S6: F: B1). The caretaker spoke about how he failed to instil a love of Irish in his family which he has, as a result of his mother speaking Irish to him. Two parents (Parent 5: F: B1 and Parent 6: F: A2) said that, while there were exposed to a lot of Irish in their home growing up, they still do not have a good command of the language. Others relayed an indifference to the Irish language in their homes. While there;

> *"… never [was] any negative attitude towards it [Irish]. We never heard them say 'we are not doing that, don't do that, we have no interest in that [Irish language]… it was just one of those things that was an unspoken thing which probably explains why no sibling went on to study Irish after they left school"* (Teacher 4: F: A1).

4.2.4.5 Irish use in the place of work.

For the adult respondents Irish was not a necessity in their place of work. Even though Irish is taught as part of the *Garda Síochána* (Police Force)

training, it is "*rarely used at work in this community*" (Parent 6: F: A2). A parent who was an archaeologist, believed he;

> *"should be fluent in Irish as the Irish language plays an important role in [his] work, but [he] does not have the time to upskill to his previous level of Irish which [he] possessed while working in the Gaeltacht*" (Parent 1: M: B1).

As part of his role as Principal, he believes that he should use the "cúpla focal" (a few words) when addressing any group in the school (Management 1: M: A2). Even though, at first hesitant, a parent who works as a secretary in a local organisation, envisaged the possibility of using more Irish on the intercom. Using Irish, when you are not used to it, "*would be different, awkward and unusual*" and she envisaged "*panic at first*" (Parent 4: F: A1) but continued:

> *"if we got used to doing that, we could add to it again but if it is complicated or long, I don't know would it work. If it is an important notice that you want everyone to understand, especially foreign workers, then you would need to do that in English*" (Parent 4: F: A1).

4.2.4.6 Interaction with Irish language media

Irish language media is rarely used by interviewees. 'The Irish Times' weekly column in Irish is read by one parent, "*if the topic is of interest and not too difficult.*" (Parent 1: M: B1). TG4 programmes are only watched if there are subtitles (Parent 3: M: N/A). Others commented on the sports coverage on TG4 but admits they can only pick up phrases, "*but you can still follow the game"* (Teacher 4: F: A1; Management 1: M: A1). No one interviewed listened to the national Irish broadcasting radio '*Raidió na Gaeltachta'*.

4.2.5 What inhibits the use of the Irish language

While the term xenoglossophobia, the feeling of unease, worry, nervousness and apprehension experienced in learning or using a second language, may be inaccurate in describing the sentiments expressed regarding speaking the

Irish language, it nevertheless echoes responses received when discussing the Irish language. Members of this school community used terms such as anxiety, fear, embarrassment, nervousness, and a lack of confidence which inhibits them to speak another language.

4.2.5.1 Negative emotions inhibiting language use

Anxiety to use Irish was more prevalent when attempting to speak with native speakers because you "*feel like a fool… [because] they would overwhelm you with the speed of their speech… they are thinking 'either do or don't' and stop your gibbering*" (Parent 5: F: B1). Similar sentiments were expressed by Jean, a non-native speaker of Irish, who lives in a *Gaeltacht* area and felt uneasy speaking to native speakers. Native speakers sometimes would make an interviewee feel uneasy when they heard her speaking "*without the local dialect*" (Teacher 6: F: C2). This teacher continues:

> *"Even for myself I find it difficult and it's a confidence thing when I meet a native speaker for the first time - I don't mind a non-native speaker but I find it difficult with a native speaker – I feel they are judging me on my language"* (Teacher 6: F: C2).

There were comments in relation to a lack of confidence which inhibits speaking a second language, for example, there was recognition that *"confidence in [level of Irish] ability" plays a mitigating factor* (Teacher 4: F: A1) and you "*would feel a little inadequate depending on who you were speaking with.*" Joining in with staff members speaking Irish, or with friends, was also tarnished with confidence issues. There is "*a lack of confidence … feel[ing] you could build confidence to use it and not to be concerned with grammatical errors"* (Teacher 5: F: B1) but she would be more confident "*if I was [talking] with students - I would probably be okay*" (Teacher 5: F: B1). Another interviewee believed "*it has to do with confidence… if I had more confidence, I would not be afraid of trying it*" (Parent 1: M: B1). This lack of confidence is clearly expressed in the following statement where the interviewee;

> *"… would be afraid if I started a conversation that I would not be able to bring it to fruition when talking to someone who is fluent in Irish. I could start it in some terms, but my fear is that they would respond in a manner that I would not be able to respond to. And that is the lack of confidence*" (Teacher 2: M: A2).

A participant would not initiate a conversation in Irish if he knew the person spoke Irish because "…*because I would feel inhibited*" (Teacher 2: M: A2). Students expressed this lack of confidence as well. They "*would not be confident to use what I have, or I would be afraid to say something in case it was wrong*" (Student J1: M: A1) or "*would not speak … out in front of everyone*" (Student J4: F: A2).

Even though confident in other areas, a lack of confidents in using a second language inhibits one to use Irish and "*to speak a new language you have to have a certain level of confidence and [people] don't have that confidence – I would be confident in other areas but not in speaking a language*" (Parent 6: F: A2).

Younger students expressed being inhibited in using Irish as "*the lads would not like to [speak Irish] because they would be laughing … especially if you were not good"* (Student Y1: M: A1). "*Most students find Irish hard and [one] would be afraid to be the one to start talking in Irish because there might be someone in the group who is good at Irish and they would start correcting me or ask me what you are saying?*" (Student Y4: F: A1). This was also the experience of a staff member who observed that his son was "*very conscious about speaking it when his friends are around.*" He attributes this to the child's age but also perhaps "*they are not encouraged to speak it in school, or he realises he does not need to learn it*" (Ancillary 1: M: A2). An interviewee, checking if he had interpreted a question I asked, answered jokingly "*Phew* [*laughing, mocking, rubbing his forehead as if with sweat*] *I am glad I got that right. I'm sweating and its only one sentence. [laughing]"* (Ancillary 1: M: A2).

The term "*discomfort*" was used to express how using Irish made her feel. - "*it can cause discomfort as there is a sense that you are not being yourself*" (Parent 5: F: B1) and when one is not fluent you are unable to express

yourself fully or be humorous. One stated that she "*would be witty in English and not having that turn of phrase in Irish is difficult …. it is frustrating and you would lose it if you can't answer them… it's frustrating ... the kick (the fun/wit) would be gone out of it"* (Parent 5: F: B1). And again *"… people feel stupid trying to use the Irish they have when it is not their first language*" (Teacher 6: F: C2) and especially when they are using it outside of a "*natural setting*" (Teacher 6: F: C2).

There was a sense of embarrassment at not having a higher standard of Irish oral skills. Discussing his reason for not furthering his Irish language skills, one interviewee says he would "*like to go to Irish classes and become fluent ... [but] I have not created the time to be less embarrassed*" (Teacher 2: M: A2). There was a sense of failure that after fourteen years of learning Irish that they are unable to master even basic language and that they could speak "*more French than Irish in all the years I was [learning Irish] and I was only learning French for five years*" (Ancillary 1: M: A2). The experience of using French while in France, was compared of using Irish here in Ireland. In France they;

> *"knew that our level of French was not that good, and they did not have any expectation. And if you got a few words out you were happy, and they seemed happy as well and somehow the message got through*" (Parent 1: M: B1).

However, to speak Irish to native speakers here he believes is different because "*there is an expectation perhaps …You would want to speak to one with Irish and I would be so afraid to say something to someone and they would comeback with something that I could not manage to answer*" (Teacher 2: M: A2).

4.2.5.2 The lack of opportunity to use Irish

Hindering progress also was the lack of opportunity to use the language (see also 4.2.3.3 above), particularly in a natural setting with the native population of Irish speakers. As mentioned earlier one participant "*had never any kind of contact*" with a native speaker (Parent 3: M: N/A). Contact with the

Gaeltacht speakers was of benefit as one respondent who admitted his Irish "*was getting better*" as a result of working in a *Gaeltacht* area in the past (Parent 1: M: B1). When "*you don't speak it every day because you don't meet people who do [speak Irish] …I would love to speak it more … but [the people I meets] don't have it"* (Teacher 6: F: C2). But contact with native speakers was not always a positive experience as some native speakers were;

> *"very snobby, dismissive, because I was not a fluent Irish speaker. And that seems to be a problem, according to my wife, they see themselves as an echelon above. They have Irish and other people don't"* (Teacher 1: M: B1).

The Irish teacher interviewed said she had "*spoken to some native speakers"* and describes their behaviour towards her as a non-native speaker as;

> *"Inverted snobbery … when you are not from the area … they would make me feel very uncomfortable speaking Irish; correcting me, laughing about the things I say. This would make me very nervous and self-conscious when talking to people like that"* (Teacher 6: F: C2).

She continues by saying that she felt "*they [were] judging me on my language."*

Even for those who professed a good knowledge of Irish they had lost it due to lack of practice. One interviewee said he "*would have been good at it at school but because I did not practice it, I lost a lot of it"* (Ancillary 1: M: A2). There is an awareness that the language learnt *"is lying there but [he] does not get a chance to use it.*" The Principal claims that when he spends a while looking at a piece of Irish "*it comes back to me"* (Management 1: M: A2).

4.2.5.3 Learning difficulties

There are those who will not participate in the project. For some they believed they were not good at the language. They had failed to learn it at

any stage in their education and they had a negative attitude towards it. The Principal was aware of this and said he had a

> *"… fear for those with learning difficulties or those from other countries and while it would help to encourage more use of the language in school but others whose sons or daughters have a child who is a slow learner, I suppose this might frighten them … unless it was done very well…. And what about someone who just comes in from Europe or Pakistan are they expected to do this?*" (Management 1: M: A2).

Participants that were unsure of whether it should be compulsory expressed concern for those who are having learning difficulties. A comment indicates that;

> *"…some kids find it very difficult and that could stem from primary school. It could be even the way it is taught. Because it is not their first language, they struggle with it all the way through. And then you get a dislike for it and that comes through"* (Parent 2: M: A1).

Yet, there was a belief that *"…it should be compulsory (for all) because then we will all have a bit of it"* (Student S1: M: A2). However, having a learning difficulty inhibits language acquisition. This was of concern to the Principal that no child should feel left out but if they are not studying Irish due to a learning difficulty, he envisages a problem. One parent spoke about her own learning difficulties at school with dyslexia and felt she "*was punished for not knowing her work*" (Parent 6: F: A2).

A parent related his own learning difficulties at school with reading and writing. He explained he liked Irish "*as a language but I am not a 'writing person' in any language…I dropped a language and took up art … it was a linguistic thing"* (Parent 2: M: A1). When he started to learn a language, he was *"flying it because it was language and aural and oral based and then I loved the language. I could listen to it and it is so musical*" (Parent 2: M: A1). However, the focus was on writing for the purpose of examinations and he began to lose interest. He passed his Irish exam because he liked "*the vocal …the sounds but [not] the written language."*

4.2.5.4 Faults with the syllabus

Inhibitions to speak and use the language were blamed on the education received. If more emphasis was placed on oral Irish skills, then some thought they would be "*more confidence speaking what I know*" (Ancillary 1: M: A2). *"If you want a language to be alive you must be able to speak it. We can read it and write it and not speak it. I would put much more emphasis on the speaking of it"* (Teacher 2: M: A2).

Inhibiting language use was also an awareness of being courteous to those who can't speak Irish so that people would not be "*left out of the conversation"* (Ancillary 1: M: A2).

4.2.5.5 Maturity and youth culture

Contextual factors of maturity and youth culture can be inhibitors or promotors of language use, depending on the individual. For adolescences, "*it is important for them to fit in … and they do not want to be seen as different*" (Teacher 4: F: A1). This would hinder progress of broadening the use of the language (Teacher 4: F: A1). Her experience of family members who attend an all Irish primary school but "*speak to their friends in English at weekends… they do not want to be different. They want to fit in*" (Teacher 4: F: A1). This was in contrast with an experience with Irish as a teenager (Parent 5: F: B1). She explains that it was a time when Irish was in vogue and

> *"… it was … cool with Hector and the Hot House Flowers and [you were] using it and at a gig… Liam Ó Maonlaigh was there and he introduced his whole act in Irish so ...you kind of got what he was saying so it was making it cool again with pop bands" (Parent 5: F: B1).*

4.2.5.6 A belief that Irish is of no benefit

Hindering the acquisition of Irish is a belief that Irish is of no benefit. Students strongest reason for using it were for extrinsic factors like achieving

good grades in examinations, a job and this was also expressed by the career guidance teacher who said they;

> *"...don't see it as useful … [apart from] it being a part of our identity and culture they don't see it as being something that is useful unless you are going to work in TG4 or Raidió na Gaeltachta or some Irish forum"* (Teacher 6: F: C2).

4.2.6 The Use of Irish in the School

An investigation of the usage of the Irish language in the school community yielded poor results. From the mission statement that made no reference to the language to methods of communications (school website, twitter and Facebook accounts and school app postings) there was no reference to, or use of, the Irish language. A photographic analysis of the print rich environment showed that Irish classrooms had Irish material on display but little else to be seen in the school building. There was one exception, a business teacher who expressed respect and knowledge of the Irish language. In the corridors the different subject classrooms were on each door in Irish, English and Braille.

All notice boards in the school advertising all the various events that take place in a vibrant school community are in English – with the exception of the Irish Language notice board which advertises Irish slogans that can be used outside the classrooms, information about various Irish summer colleges and various apps students can use to improve their Irish skills. Advertisements of events, achievements and accolades are posted on two large television screens that have revolving messages daily in two main assembly areas in the school. English was the only language used on these displays. A newly erected project where students were asked to write slogans which would aid mental health showed that all students expressed themselves using English slogans. When this was brought to the attention of the organising teacher, he said he had not thought of encouraging student to use some Irish. A few days later an Irish proverb about health was added.

It is only the Irish teachers who are heard speaking Irish outside of the classroom and Irish can be heard being overheard coming from the various Irish classrooms. Students are heard occasionally addressing their Irish teacher on the corridor with brief Irish questions being answered.

It was clear that there is no policy on promoting the Irish language or a bilingual policy. Teachers expressed objections to displaying bilingual messages as "*not having time*" (discussion recorded in observational diary, see Appendix P) or a fear that it "*would not be right to get it [spellings of Irish words] wrong*" (Art teacher). Those who approved of using more Irish did so with caution stating that "*I would have to run everything by an Irish teacher before displaying anything in Irish*," was the reply of one colleague in a conversation about the study.

From documents collected and analysed there was further evidence that the language is not a priority in the school. From staff meetings' notes the Irish language was mentioned on one occasion when '*Seachtain na Gaeilge*' was mentioned. There was no Irish language used in the school's biannual newsletter nor in the brochure for the annual school musical, in the school prospectus, nor in the annual school magazine "The Voice" where there were messages from the Principal welcoming readers/audience to the event which normally started with a greeting in Irish stating "*Tá súil agam go mbainfidh sibh taitneamh as X"* (I hope you enjoy the X).

Throughout the study my researcher's diary recorded the use of Irish words, phrases or conversations witnessed in the organisation. No Irish was used on the Intercom apart from the Principal using "*Gabh mo leithscéal*" (Excuse me) during *Seachtain na Gaeilge* in March 2018. When one contacts the school by phone, it is answered using English. When visitors approach the school office they are greeted in English.

Since the inception of this study and a subsequent interview with the principal, the headed school notepaper is now bilingual. Bar one participants, the remainder of interviewees were unaware of this change. Investigating the awareness of interviewees of Irish in their surroundings highlighted that was

little awareness, stating that they did not know where Irish was to be seen bar the Irish classrooms and Irish notice board, and that Irish was more prevalent during S*eachtain na Gaeilge* (Irish Week) (Teacher 1: M: B1; Management 1: M: A1). When teachers of different subjects were asked why they did not use some Irish language in their project there was a strong sense that they never thought of it or that, as in the case of a European studies project on display, the students "*did not think of Irish as a European language*" (European Studies Teacher as recorded in observational diary)

4.3 Attitudes and Beliefs

It was helpful to use Spolsky's language policy theory as a framework by which to consider the data in the analysis. The second tenet of the model deals with attitude and beliefs and therefore it was important to ascertain what the language attitudes and beliefs were of all the participants in the study, as well as what the beliefs and attitudes the researcher could ascertain from organisational documentations, visual study of the environment and, this coupled with the data from the observational diary, create an insight into how this organisation views the Irish language.

4.3.1 Attitudes to language in the organisation.

Before asking participants about the Irish language it was interesting to ascertain their beliefs about what language is. The following is a summary of their views on language. First, there is awareness that English is everywhere and in the school all communications, verbal, electronically and in writing are through the medium of English. *"Everyone speaks English as their first language. Therefore, we don't need to speak in Irish*" (Student S6: F: B1) and "…*because English … is spoken everywhere. It has taken away from the Irish language because everything on TV is in English*" (Student S1: M: A2). It is a "*a huge advantage for this island to be able to speak English … it makes the population employable in so many other countries and is excellent for the economy of the country and for tourism*" (Parent 3: M: N/A). We now live in a multilingual society and Irish society has "*changed … and*

it's multicultural [therefore] there are so many different languages now. It's not just Irish and English [like] … when I was in school" (Teacher 5: F: B1). She continues saying that people are "*so much more well-travelled as well so that Irish does not feature in the same way for everybody*" (Teacher 5: F: B1).

Comments on other languages in the community, describe it as *"… cool because they are speaking their own language*" (Student S4: F: B2) or describe it as "*interesting … listening to my friend speak to her Mexican mother in Spanish*" (Student Y4: F: A1). A non-national parent who spoke four languages fluently, and two languages basically, could "*switch from one language to another without problem"* (Parent 3: M: N/A). His experience was that "*it was easy when you live in the country to learn the language*". In Europe "*it is so common – a lot of people have more than one language*" (Parent 3: M: N/A). *"Keeping [Lithuanian] alive [is] not a chore*" (Parent 5: F: B1) for a Lithuanian friend who uses Lithuanian with her children in the home. There was sense that listening to immigrants speak their own language made participants feel that "… *we should be holding on to our language.*" (Teacher 5: F: B1).
There was a belief that "*at the end of the day [language is] for communication and that is the bottom line*." (Teacher 4: F: A1).

Finally, there was a belief that if you do not practice a language you lose that language quickly. Speaking a language requires practice and without practice it is possible to forget how to speak it. Speaking about how he is losing his Spanish after speaking it fluently for six years (Gary, Science teacher recorded in diary Appendix O) highlights that you must "*use it or you lose it*" (Teacher 5: F: B1).

4.3.2 Attitudes to the Irish language.

Positive, negative and indifferent opinions were expressed towards the Irish language. Those who were negative focused on the reality that Irish was not necessary to live in Ireland and not used in this community for "*normal natural communications*" (Parent 2: M: A1).

4.3.2.1 Irish is not a priority in school

The Irish language is not prioritised, it is a "*school subject that has to be done*" (Parent 4: F: A1) and prior to the interview one interviewee had not "*thought a whole pile about it [Irish]"* (Parent 4: F: A1) adding that learning the language now "*would not be something on my radar [loud laugh]*." Others referred to the language not being a priority in their lives saying that they had "*not overthought about it …. You come in and do your own subject and we presume that other things go ahead*" (Teacher 5: F: B1). It was evident that "*there are a lot of people who probable don't want [Irish]*" (Teacher 5: F: B1) for a myriad of reasons.

The school mission statement makes no reference to language or culture (see Appendix S) and therefore it can be assumed that the school community do not prioritise Irish culture and language. The comparison between this organisation's mission statement and the mission statement of an all-Irish school highlights this. The all-Irish school makes strong references to its role as a protector of the Irish language:

> "'Sé dualgas pobal na scoile uile an Ghaeilge agus an cultúr a chaomhnú agus a chur chun cinn, agus tús áite a thabhairt don teanga i gcónaí" (Meánscoil San Nioclás, 2018).
>
> (It is the responsibility of this school community to protect and preserve the language and to give the language precedence always).

This is supported by some accounts regarding the use of the Irish language in the community. *"In an all Irish speaking school I suppose that Irish language use would be top of the agenda but when it is not, then … it is not a priority*" as recorded in observational diary, following a discussion with a colleague on the topic. It was evidently not a priority with the Principal who was unaware of the obligations of the school under the *Education Act* 1998 in relation to the Irish language and said that it was not an issue being spoken about when he attended meetings of Principals and school leaders around the country.

4.3.2.2 Irish is not necessary to survive in Ireland.

English is spoken in most of the country (see Figure 2.2) in Ireland so as a tool of communication Irish is not necessary unless you live in a *Gaeltacht* area (See also discussion 4.2.3.3). An Irish language teacher claimed that "*students have plenty of Irish when they need it, but there is no need*" to use it (Appendix T). As English is recognised as a global language, it questions why Irish should be learned: "*How is that going to be of benefit I don't know*" (Parent 3: M: N/A). There is "*no burning desire to go out and learn the language and even though I am not good at Irish I know I can get by with the English I have*" (Teacher 4: F: A1). Language is viewed as "*a way of communication… It does not matter as long as you can communicate*" (Parent 1: M: B1). However, he adds "… *when I look back on it, I know it will be a regret that I have not done something about it – learn Irish that is*" (Parent 1: M: B1).

There is a belief that it is a futile language in "*the labour market once you leave this country, and … Irish is only needed in pockets of Ireland or, in Civil Service jobs*" (Parent 5: F: B1). As it is viewed as futile perhaps time should be spent on learning a European language (Dutch according to Parent 2: M: A1; Spanish according to Gary (Science teacher in observational diary) who says it would "*be a worthy language learn*", and German (Teacher 6: F: C2)). There was concern for young people disillusioned having had "*a dead language drummed*" into them which they cannot use when abroad or here in Ireland (Parent 5: F: B1).

As discussed above (4.2.5.2) there are few opportunities to use Irish. It is not the first language in the school community. Therefore "*where would I use it?"* asks a colleague. Children realise from an early age that they "*do not need it or learn it or hear it outside of school*" (Ancillary 1: M: A2) referring to his own child's experience of Irish at home. There is less urgency to learn it as a result. Since moving to Ireland Parent 3: M: N/A has not met an Irish speaker, so he had no contact with the Irish speech community. A teacher who would love the opportunity to use his Irish says he "*rarely get[s] a*

chance to use Irish" adding that he could communicate with "*anyone who would want to communicate with [him]*" (Teacher 3: M: B2). The biggest challenge facing the Irish language is "*use and how to use it*" (Teacher 1: M: B1).

4.3.2.3 There is no advantage to speak Irish.

The question asked is it practical to learn Irish? One view is that it *"…was of no advantage to them in monetary terms*" (Ancillary 1: M: A2). It was no advantage for job prospects of those who will emigrate:

> "*going to Europe … the States to work and you are hammering this dead language …. that is only going to work in Ireland and even at that you don't need it to work in Ireland. Only in pockets in Ireland or in the civil service"* (Parent 5: F: B1).

It poses the question if *"… it is it worth the effort...[because] it is no practical benefit to me or the majority of the people but there is a little smidgen of me who still wants to have it*" (Teacher 2: M: A2). There is, therefore, no pressure to learn Irish as "*they don't see it as being useful and they don't see it… because it is not being used*." (Teacher 6: F: C2). They "*would like to have [Irish]…but do not have as much as [they] would like …. [but] I don't need it, but I would like to have it*" (Ancillary 1: M: A2). Students only really want to learn it if they need it for their future careers (Teacher 6: F: C2).

4.3.2.4 Irish competing with other cultures.

There was a belief that the Irish language and culture seem to be competing with stronger cultures today. One interviewee believed that Irish culture has;

> "*been very much influenced by outside cultures whether it is soccer, what headphones are the latest guy wearing, what football boots are they wearing, if Rhianna is singing her latest song what is she wearing. I think we are very influenced by external circumstances*" (Teacher 1: M: B1).

As discussed above (4.2.3.3) the power of the English language was also evident to Teacher 1: M: B1 who witnessed his all Irish speaking in-laws

speaking and they "*would use newer words … and they use the English instead of the new Irish word in place. They have not bothered to translate that word.*" This is an indication of the more powerful language infiltrating the weaker language.

4.3.2.5 Viewing Irish as a subject and not a living language.

Many participants talked about how Irish is viewed as a subject rather than a functional language. It was for some "*a subject at school … but on reflection it is a living language for some people*" (Ancillary 1: M: A2). Another contributor commented on this disconnection between what is being taught and what students real life experiences are . He spoke about learning about "ag *piocadh sméara dubha*" (picking blackberries) referring to a theme used in the primary school classrooms in the past. He did not recognise the language as being the same language he spoke to his grandmother who lived in a *Gaeltacht* region (Parent 1: M: B1). When participants spoke about the language, they spoke about the only connection they had with it and that was as a subject (Ancillary 1: M: A2, Parent 2: M: A1). For immigrant parents Irish "*is not important to them – just a subject*." (Parent 3: M: N/A). Students can view Irish as "… *something that they do between 10:30 and 11:00 and that's it.*" (Teacher 3: M: B2). Another person refers to Irish: *"… even as kids Irish would not ever have been a favourite subject*" (Teacher 4: F: A1), and states that she "*never heard them (her parents) speaking any Irish at all when [they] were kids*."

4.3.2.6 The symbolic function of Irish and Irish as a marker of identity

The language held a symbolic function of Irishness rather than a working functional language for the community in this area. An article from *The Irish Times* brought to the researcher's attention by a teacher after we had a discussion about the Irish language summed up how he felt about Irish. The author of the article wrote:

> "For most people … Irish is part of our cultural identity…. The language is something we have inherited from previous generations, like round towers or dolmens, but by the same token most of us would as soon

live in a round tower as speak Irish on a daily basis. It has a symbolic function but is not seen as having a practical value" (Doyle, 2014).

A parent expressed similar sentiment, explaining the he loved Irish music and felt it was a marker of Irish culture, heritage and identity, but he could not play any instrument. He explains: "… *not playing an Irish instrument does not make me feel less Irish and not being able to speak Irish does not make me feel less Irish"* (Parent 2: M: A1).

A mention was made of Irish as a symbol of Republicanism which is not viewed in a positive manner. Diary notes record a person who loves Irish but would feel uncomfortable speaking it in her area as "*they [the community] might think she had political affiliations to any militant group*", a reference to *Sinn Féin*, an Irish political party, or a reference to the IRA (paramilitary movements in Ireland in the 20th and the 21st century dedicated to Irish republicanism).

A teacher interviewee recalled her experiences abroad where she believed the language played "*an important role as a marker of Irish identity*" (Teacher 4: F: A1). Speaking Irish "*definitely when you are on holidays, when you are abroad, you want that sense of pride and most people feel this… [and you may] regret that you did not try and learn Irish more and it is extremely important*" (Teacher 6: F: C2). She continues "… *it is our culture; it is part of us.*" (Teacher 6: F: C2). The Principal of the school stated that he was conscious as school leader that the students should hear him "*throwing in some Irish words… and let them hear me use Irish ever though it is a very limited amount of Irish*" (Management 1: M: A2).

The experiences of living away from Ireland highlights Irishness and a necessity to show your national identity as was evident in one interview that explained how he "*tried to speak Irish*" when working in Boston (Teacher 1: M: B1). Another, who studied and worked in the UK attempted to capture why Irish was important to her then:

"*It's hard to explain … You are very proud, you've got something, you are a community, collectively, you're Irish. You just feel it inside. These things*

are important and when you go away you notice they are even more important and even if you have only the few words." (Teacher 4: F: A1).

The Irish language as a marker of identity was mentioned throughout the interviews. It was important to have some knowledge of Irish "*because we are Irish" and the fear that if we don't speak it, it will be lost"* (Teacher 2: M: A2). Irish was compared to the demise of Latin which *"… is considered a dead language. …[and] if you let a language die … you are losing a piece of what it is to be Irish or a part of being of this island."* (Teacher 2: M: A2). It is *"your language… so this language is part of what you are… about 150 years ago everyone spoke the language… it is a part of your identity"* said (Parent 3: M: N/A) who immigrated from Serbia. He continues, *"so Irish is your native language, connected to this island, so it should not have been forbidden and lost."* Therefore, all Irish;

> "… *people should have a very good understanding of it. To speak basic conversational Irish … a greeting on the street, asking for paper etc … I think people should, but I know there is probably a reluctance on people to learn it."* (Teacher 1: M: B1).

When the Principal was asked if he thought new immigrants before getting citizenship, should learn Irish, he said he thought it was a good idea but that the same would happen to them as happened to him when learning Irish for his *Ceard Teastas* – once he got his exam, he never used it again.

4.3.2.7 Views on bilingualism

There was evident support for bilingualism. Bilingual road signage (Parent 3: M: N/A) was mentioned as an important symbol. The Serbian contributor added that he *"… grew up in that particular part, part Serbian, part Hungarian and we had all signage in both languages all of the time*" (Parent 3: M: N/A). Others spoke about bilingual signage (Teacher 5: F: B1; Parent 6: F: A2; Teacher 1: M: B1) stating this would be welcomed in the school. There was a strong sense from many participants that *"we should all have a bit of it instead of English because we are Irish*" (Student J1: M: A1). Having not "*grasped*" the Irish language at school one interviewee claimed to be "*a*

bit jealous" when she hears her friends speaking Irish (Teacher 4: F: A1). Nevertheless, she would not return to classes to learn it. She still views Irish "*a part of our culture and heritage and I would not like to see it dying out*". This echoes the views of stakeholders interviewed i.e. that Irish people do see Irish as part of their heritage but do not feel sufficiently strong to merit the time and energy it would need to speak it naturally.

4.3.3 Attitude to learning Irish

4.3.3.1 Attitudes toward the Irish language syllabus

There was criticism of the Irish language syllabus for several reasons. The emphasis on literature at the expense of the spoken language was criticised. A teacher spoke about how he "*thought it was so unfair that some people could speak it and it all depended on the school and on good teachers and that there were very little of them around or so he thought*". He added that "*If you could not speak the language or if you had not learned the basics then it was very difficult to engage with "literature laden syllabus*" (Science teacher in a conversation recorded in observational diary). The new syllabus introduced for Junior Certificate students last year addresses these criticisms and now there are two syllabi (T1 for those who are native speakers and T2 for students who are learning language in an English-medium post-primary school).

There was a sense that:

> "*every year we do the same think in class and we still don't know much. We talk about 'mo scoil' (my school), 'mo chlann' (my family), mo (my) this and that but we still can't speak it because we are not taught how to speak it only how to write it that is all*" (Student Y2: M: A2).

If you only learn the "*bare amount [in primary school] you lose out*" (Student Y4: F: A1). Claiming to be fortunate that she "*learn[s] essays and the answers to questions*" she can write them out and get;

> "*fairly good marks for doing that but in two years' time I will be doing an oral exam…[and] I will be very nervous for that [which] I don't think I*

should be if I am doing it since I was in first class in primary school" (Student Y4: F: A1).

Where there was an emphasis on oral work and roll play in primary school it was enough language *"to keep up until third year in post-primary school*." (Teacher 1: M: B1). He loved the language throughout his education describing his oral Irish examination as "*a dream to go through*."
As a result of the problems encountered with the Irish syllabus there is a belief that students have "*more French after five years … than Irish after fourteen years of learning"* (Ancillary 1: M: A2). However, achieving good grades in a language in Leaving Certificated does not mean you can speak that language. The Principal's observations of his own family were that they achieved high grades in both Irish and German but can only communicate basically in both languages. His daughter was distressed about spending a semester in Germany due to her incompetent level of German, but he is adamant that being immersed and having basic German she will learn quickly. He believes this would happen also if the language was Irish.

4.3.3.2 Teaching methodology – rote learning.

Criticism was levied at rote learning teaching methodology which appeared to be standard practice in the classroom, but the language was not being internalised to sufficient level that students were able to communicate. As a result, they "*write a lot and … read a lot, but I cannot hold a conversation. If I am given an essay to learn off, I can learn it off, but I cannot say anything if anyone asks me anything in Irish*" (Student S5: F: B2). The main criticism is best summed up in the following comment:

> *"The one thing about learning the language growing up is that we did not speak it enough. We read it and we wrote it and rewrote it and wrote it again and then rote learned it. But we did not speak it. To totally have a language you have to be able to be able to speak it and be totally comfortable with a language you have to speak it. That is the only thing about the approach of the teaching of Irish is we do not*

speak it enough… If you want a language to be alive you must be able to speak it." (Teacher 2: M: A2).

There was criticism of "*learning off essays and answers to question in place of teaching the language*" (Teacher 1: M: B1) (Appendix Q). This was not the parent's experience of learning Irish and she claimed that while rote learning "*seems to get good students high marks, and then high points and places in colleges but not satisfactory command over the spoken language*." She adds "…*it is not learning a language… [they have Irish but] not real Irish*." (From a discussion with a colleague about the topic). Students reported "*it hard to learn all the stuff off by heart like we have to*" (Student Y2: M: A2).

One contributor describer her oral Irish examination for Leaving Certificate as her "*party piece*." She explains that she had rote learned her answers in anticipation of the questions:

> "*a party piece…What are your hobbies? MY HOBBIES ARE KNITTING SEWING [shouting to indicate rote learning of material] rather than using it [Irish] normally. The exam should be assessing how prolific you are in the language rather than how good you are at rote learning"* (Teacher 4: F: A1).

The methodology was viewed as predominately negative but, occasionally as a method that ensured some Irish was learned. Irish "*was all learned… by rote learning but only for that I would not have any Irish"* (Teacher 4: F: A1). Rote learning methodology was praised by another teacher who said: "*they might have drummed it into us, but they made you feel that you knew something*" but admits later "*even though we could not speak it [Irish]"* (Teacher 5: F: B1). A teacher described her Irish skills as "*verbal [skills] would be the best of a bad bunch – I suppose my primary school was all learning off things, rote learning... and that has stayed with me*" (Teacher 3: F: B1).

While the education system is responsible for keeping Irish alive, there was criticism of how it was taught. The system does not produce fluent or high-level Irish speakers.

4.3.3.3 The experiences of learning Irish at school

Apparently, "*people get a negative attitude to Irish especially if they have a negative experience of it in school*" (Parent 4: F: A1). This parent's experience of it in school was indifferent. It was just a subject. Such indifference towards the language was palpable in other replies. For the language to die out "*would be shame but not a disaster*" (Parent 5: F: B1). The parent explained that "*we should keep it and not lose it and try and nurture it if we can.*" However, she warns that "*life is so busy and fast now*" (Parent 5: F: B1). A teacher questioned the value of Irish to young emigrants. While others stated they would "*hate to see that happen" i.e. the depletion of the Irish language.*" (Teacher 3: M: B2).

If a student missed the basics of the language when they started learning Irish, especially in primary school, it was difficult to catch up. A parent at a parent-teacher meeting expressed concern that she was unable to help her daughter with homework as the mother *"had missed the basics in school."* (A parent the researcher spoke to at a parent teacher meeting). Even having a bad experience with Irish during a period of primary school where *"the teacher did very little Irish"* was why a parent felt they found it hard to catch up after that (Parent 1: M: B1). Being unable to progress with Irish in post-primary a teacher said that she *"did not grasp the language as I had missed the basics, the past tense and the words and when I progressed on I did not have the confidence or the ability to be able to write an essay and it was a struggle."* (Teacher 4: F: A1). The impact of a teachers on attitudes to learning Irish were also mentioned here but have been discussed above (see 4.2.3.2).

4.3.3.4 An Innate love of learning languages

Enhancing language learning is the innate love of languages some people possess. A teacher said he "*absolutely loved it [learning Irish] ….and would sit for hours with the book and went through the dánta [poetry] and the literature … with the foclóir [dictionary] translating it"* (Teacher 2: M: A2). For those with this innate love of learning languages there was evident

frustration. One interviewee who expressed a love of language highlighted his frustration believing he should be better at Irish having *"been learning [Irish] for fifteen years …. [he] should be perfect"* (Teacher 3: M: B2). His frustration became apparent when he claimed;

> "*unfortunately ….the education system is letting the language down. I loved Irish in school because …I loved the books and I loved languages …but when you think of it, I should be a native speaker at this stage"* (Teacher 3: M: B2).

4.3.3 Incentives to learn Irish

Participants acknowledge that it is difficult to learn when there is no reason for learning the language. The success of promoting a language initiative depends on what a person can gain from it. As Irish is not required for communication purposes participants forwarded incentives, they believe encourage them to learn Irish.

4.3.3.1 Learning for career purposes

As Irish is a requirement for a number of careers, one said that if

> "… *you learn Irish then you are going to become a teacher … you will be teaching Irish. You are not going to use it otherwise for example my parents learned Irish in school, but they never use it"* (Student J2: M: A2)

or "*you need it for the Guards and some state jobs*." (Student Y6: F: B1). The career guidance teacher supports this as the students "*see it (Irish) as being useful or necessary if they want to teach*" (Teacher 6: F: C2). Focusing on job opportunities an immigrant parent thought that if he could say on his CV that he was "*fluent in Irish and [he] might have a bigger or better chance of getting the job"* (Parent 3: M: N/A).

4.3.3.2 To make the subject easier and gain better grades

Where students expressed a wish "*to be able to speak [Irish]" it was not so much out of a love of the language but "because then [they] would not have to learn off essays off by heart. If I could speak it then I would be able to just write what I was thinking.*" (Student S4: F: B2). The dislike and difficulty of rote learning would be made easier by being able to speak Irish (see discussion on rote learning 4.3.3.2). Another stated she *"… would not have to be remembering boring essays off by heart. I could write exactly what I would like without having to remember a lot of stuff I don't understand"* (Student Y6: F: B1).

Viewing the study of Irish as a means to an end (also see 4.2.3.5) was mentioned by a parent who recognised that her children "*use Irish*" when they wanted "*a favour or to charm their parents… or their grandmother [who they know loves Irish]*" (Parent 5: F: B1) and they are rewarded with praise. Many teachers view a visit to an Irish course in a Summer colleges in the '*Gaeltacht*' as a '*rite of passage' and one parent suspects that her children "learn Irish because they know their parents will allow them to go to the Gaeltacht …it is for the craic, for a holiday, to get away for a while*." (Parent 5: F: B1).

An incentive to learn Irish well would ensure good grades in examinations and it was the main reason for learning Irish according to the teenagers interviewed. Another, speaking about her daughter who was studying for her Leaving Certificate states that *"…at the moment we are Leaving Cert and we are focused on trying to make sure we are using it (Irish language) a little bit more if we can at all. Even if it is broken and not very confident at home."* (Teacher 5: F: B1).

4.3.3.3 Monetary Gains

No one commented how learning Irish would benefit them economically however, reference was made to how, in the past, if a student got Honours Grades in Irish he or she could *"… get a county council grant (to go to college)… and it was so important so … it was great to get a higher grade in Irish.*" (Parent 1: M: B1). Indirectly, passing Irish in the Leaving Certificate examination grades enables students to matriculate for many Irish

Universities which means students will have a degree qualification leading to a professional career

4.3.3.4 Learning Irish for National Identity.

Learning Irish for the purpose of having a national identity was mentioned throughout the interviews by both students and adults. It is nice to be able to show we have our own language; "*if you have someone beside you who speak your language … you can have a conversation and to continue on would be good"* (Parent 3: M: N/A). However, this identity was not called upon until abroad, for example *"… when you are away on holidays it is nice to be able to show we have our own language. But other times you would not really use Irish.*" (Student J3: M: A1). (Irish used when abroad has been discussed above, see 4.2.4.2). Another mentioned the national pride he felt singing *Amhrán na bhFiann*, (The National Anthem), in Irish at football matches – describing the feeling as "*it brings us all together."* (Ancillary 1: M: A2).

4.3.3.5 Learning Irish to benefit from the Irish Television Station (TG4).

Learning Irish enables people to watch and enjoy the programs on TG4, the Irish television station. For example, "*watching great sports programs would be better if I had more Irish*" (Ancillary 1: M: A2) and "*watching the ladies football games on TG4 I can only understand some of the words*" (Teacher 4: F: A1).

4.3.4 Factors inhibiting Irish language learning

4.3.4.1 Absence of immersion opportunities

For the majority, school is the only place they encounter Irish and interviewees believed that "*definitely schools are keeping it [Irish] alive*." (Parent 5: F: B1). The absence of immersion in the language is a hindrance to effective language learning. A parent who spoke four languages fluently

explains that learning a language is *"…so much easier when you are hearing it all the time and you are seeing all the language around you and you are trying every day to say something…you are listening carefully*" (Parent 3: M: N/A).

4.3.4.2 Irish will not be used again after school

However, there is a realisation also that they may not use the language again after they leave school unless they so wish. This can hinder Irish language learning and therefore a parent believes that the focus in post-primary school should be on fostering *" (a) a love of the language and (b) a wish or desire to use it again."* (Parent 2: M: A1) in the student population. One reply admits that "*since I left school, I would have used very little Irish – maybe with a few drinks I would have a laugh with the brother now and again. I would be braver then*" (Ancillary 1: M: A2). He spoke about his involvement with sports and motor racing and said he "*would never use Irish with that group. I don't know if any of them even speak Irish*" (Ancillary 1: M: A2). This highlighting the insignificant of Irish in his life, yet he professes he would "*like to have*" Irish and he does not "*have as much as [he] would like … but then again I don't need it*." Once students leave school and need to go to work or study abroad, Parent 5: F: B1 imagines young people asking themselves why schools were "*hammering this dead language into [them]."*

4.3.4.3 Time constraints

Time factors inhibit Irish language learning for adult learners stating, "*finding the time to learn [Irish] is a problem"* (Ancillary 1: M: A2). Even those who professed a desire to be more fluent attributed the obstacles of "*time and opportunity*" as a hindrance as one lived in rural Ireland and there was little opportunity to do night classes. *"Partly laziness [and being] too busy to do something about it because what would I do with it"* was an inhibitor (Parent 1: M: B1). Due to a busy working life the Principal should *"be making a better effort to learn the language but this would not happen in that busy post."* (Staff member recorded in observational diary). Time constraints were

mentioned as a deterrent to teachers using Irish in the classroom claiming there *was "no time for doing all the extra work we are expected to do, let alone doing more in the Irish language "nor "did not see it as [her] job … [and would] not have the time or the level of Irish needed"* to create posters in Irish (Notes from observational diary). There was concern about *"the workload…[but] if you could see it as something that would not take up so much of your time"* (Teacher 5: F: B1) she would assist in promoting the broadening of the Irish language in the school.

4.3.4.4 Personal beliefs and attributes about Irish language abilities

There was a belief that a person must be good at language to learn Irish. Students commented that "*I am no good at languages; it is all languages*" (Student Y4: F: A1) or "*I never got it and I never understood why I could not. I would not know many words"* (Student Y2: M: A2). A student was unsure of his oral skills stating *"I don't think I can speak it… I really don't try much"* (Student Y1: M: A1). However, the education system was at fault also insofar as it only recognised certain linguistic skills as highlighted by the parent who loved learning Irish, *"loved the sounds of it"* but because there was such emphasis on reading and writing he lost interest in it (Parent 2: M: A1). When an individual found Irish difficult to learn they expressed a dislike for the language/subject explaining that, they never *"understood why I could not" [learn Irish]* (Student Y2: M: A2).

4.3.4.5 Missed opportunities to use the language in the landscape.

From studying the photographic evidence, it became evident that there were many missed opportunities where Irish could be used around the building, on websites, noticeboards, school apps, school social media sites etc. There were ample opportunities for bilingual signage on noticeboards for example advertising the activities of 'Big Sister Big Brother', 'Green schools', 'Coding club', 'Student Council', 'Sports events', 'Debating', 'Library'. It was evident that there was no policy in the school for bilingual practices. There were also opportunities in classrooms that would have scaffolded the teaching of Irish (Geography, Biology, History, Business, Art, Woodwork classrooms) where

language could have been displayed.
It was evident therefore that there is very little focus on the Irish language outside the Irish language classroom and this is surprising as Irish is a compulsory subject on the curriculum.
The next section investigates participants' views on compulsory Irish.

4.3.5 Views on compulsory Irish in schools

As stated earlier, Irish is a compulsory subject for all students (with exemptions given to students who have learning difficulties or who have entered the Irish education system after the age of eleven). Ascertaining interviewees' views on the compulsory element of Irish would give an insight into their attitudes and beliefs about the Irish language. Their replies varied but with the majority in favour of retaining the compulsory aspect.

4.3.5.1 Retaining compulsory Irish for nationalistic and cultural reasons

The majority of interviewees favoured Irish being maintained as a compulsory subject. It should be compulsory for nationalistic reasons. Simply "… *you are Irish, and you are going to school in Ireland*" (Student J3: M: A1). However, a student predicted that not many students would choose it if they were given the choice. (Student J3: M: A1).
It incorporates the Irish culture and "*an understanding of the language … has certain historical significance as well*" (Teacher 1: M: B1). There was a view that:

> "…*all children should be exposed to the language…[and] when they are eighteen, they should make up their own mind. It's not going to kill them to learn and study it for a few years*" (Parent 1: M: B1).

4.3.5.2 Retaining compulsory Irish to preserve the language.

Compulsory Irish preserves the language as *"not as many people would have it and it would die out and I suppose the Gaeltachtaí would die out as well"* (Student Y1: M: A1) and "… *if it was not you would not ever get the*

chance to see it or use it. You are not going to learn it anywhere else…if it was not compulsory not many people would pick it so then there would be less people to speak to" (Student J5: F: B2).

Moreover, there was a belief that if Irish was not on the curriculum, we might have "*no Irish at all because [we do] not have … Irish at home*" (Student J4: F: A2).

4.3.5.3 Compulsory Irish is pointless when one does not want to learn it.

Those who were opposed to the compulsory element of the language said that teaching students who had "*no interest whatsoever*" in learning the language was like "*banging your head off a wall*" (Teacher 6: F: C2). She continued: "*I think that that is doing more damage to the students. If I was tried on a trial [to have a choice instead of compulsory] for five years to see how it would go.*" There was an argument that "*not many speak it and when it is compulsory you are forcing people to speak it – I think that is a bad thing to be forced to do it if you don't want to.*" (Student J2: M: A2).
To counteract this argument another stated that students "*at that age, they are very young to make a decision for ever more – if they don't get the opportunity to do Irish at school then when are they going to do it*" (Teacher 6: F: C2).

4.3.5.4 Who would choose it if not compulsory?

However, there was a thought that no one would choose Irish unless "*they were speaking it at home [then] it would be much easier … but when you are not speaking it at home then why would you want to pick it"* (Student J1: M: A1). It would only be chosen *"… if there were points going for it for their exams or if you had to do it for career reasons*"(Student J4: F: A2).
Mentioned earlier also (see 4.3.3.1) were the careers that require a certain grade in the Leaving Certificate Irish exam. Parent 4: F: A1 could see both sides of having compulsory but also the futility of it: *"… I think it should be compulsory [because] we are Irish, and we should know our own language*

… so why would you not use your own language here. I think it would be a nice thing if we could speak it." According to another: "*If it isn't [compulsory] it will be lost but [she] does not agree with the "hammer and tongs" approach to teaching it."* (Parent 5: F: B1).

4.3.5.5 Other suggested models of compulsory Irish

Suggestions made included having it compulsory only up completion of primary school level believing "*with a freedom choice, [the Irish language] would grow as a stronger language.*" (Parent 2: M: A1) or "*making it compulsory up to Junior Certificate [third year in post-primary school]."* (Student J4: F: A2). Those who suggested different models of delivery believed that:

> *"…if it was not compulsory then people would be more likely to buy into it … but I think we have responsibility as a country to speak our own language and I think everybody in the country should be given a certain level of tuition in it. And I think it should be compulsory but also I don't think it should be a total opt out for people"* (Teacher 3: M: B2).

4.3.5.7 Compulsory Irish – an ineffective practice.

Three teachers interviewed addressed the issue of the compulsory requirement of the *Ceard Teastas*, a teaching qualification required by all post-primary teachers (prior to 2000), discussed earlier (see 4.2.2.3). All three commented that they felt it was ineffective to them acquiring the language. They knew they would not be using it and that it did not prepare them for teaching through the medium of Irish (Management 1: M: A1; Teacher 2: M: A2; Teacher 5: F: B1). Making it a compulsory component of their qualification did not enhance the language or instil any further desire to continue speaking and learning the language.

4.3.6 Tokenism and the "Cúpla focal" ideology

4.3.6.1 School literature and documentation

Overt and covert tokenism was evident throughout the school in interviews, documentation studies, photographic studies and observational diary. The school prides itself on its annual musical show but a study of the brochure/programme for the show opens with the customary “Fáilte go dtí an scoil” (Welcome to the school) and finishes with “Tá súil agam go mbainfidh sibh taitneamh as an gceoldráma” (I hope you enjoy the musical).

4.3.6.2 The school print rich landscape

Each classroom has the name of the subject, in Irish, being taught in that room. The Irish noticeboard has notices in Irish. Irish language classrooms have a lot of work displayed in Irish but only one other classroom had Irish posters on the walls because the teacher involved has a great interest in languages and in particular the Irish language. It is believed that “*most people have the ‘cúpla focal’ that they got at school.*” (Ancillary 1: M: A2).

4.3.6.3 The views of the school’s Principal.

The Principal also stated that he was;

> “*conscious …as school leader …[he] should be throwing in some Irish words to the kids” later he stated that he “tries to start every talk with a few lines in Irish … I would greet them, and I would explain what the night is about and then I would repeat this again in English”* (Management 1: M: A1).

This is an example of the tokenism approach to the Irish language.

4.3.6.4 Other views on tokenism.

The tokenistic view was also allured to by a teacher who studied and worked in the United Kingdom. She explains:

> *“You are very proud, you’ve got something, you are a community, collectively, you’re Irish. You just feel it inside. These things are important and when you go away you notice they are even more important and even if you have only the few words”* (Teacher 4: F: A1).

The *cúpla focal* tokenism is apparently enough to get a sense of being Irish. It grounds your national identity. "*If you can speak it, I think it does give you a deeper understanding of it [identity]*" (Parent 6: F: A2). Singing the National Anthem suffices as having Irish as indicated by a contributor. *"I know the Irish anthem … I sing that every time I am at a Mayo match or a soccer match and it is great. It brings us together as a country"* (Ancillary 1: M: A2).

Findings from the research indicate the view that a few words of Irish is sufficient knowledge of Irish for the majority of people to indicate that they can speak Irish. "*An cúpla focal*", meaning a few words, was mentioned by many participants, especially when referring to being on holidays (See 4.2.2.3; 4.2.4.2; 4.3.2.6 and 4.3.3.4 for reference to using the '*cúpla focal*' while abroad).

In daily live very little Irish is used; but Irish words are used in English phrases as explained by a student who said she "might use the odd word with my brother or sister, what's on the *teilifís* [television] or *uisce* [water] or something like that." (Student Y5: F: B1). Another agreed:

> *"It must start with the cúpla focal …if they hear it and use the odd word, they might not use a full sentence for two years, but when they do, they will have spent time without knowing it … structuring the language in their minds"* (Teacher 5: F: B1).

The *cúpla focal* ideology is also used by children, "*it is used something like a pawn "An bhfuil cupán tae ag teastáil uait? (Do you want a cup of tea?) … to charm me because they know I will hear it and think 'fair play'*" (Parent 5: F: B1).

There was a sense that the few words are sufficient: *"I think they are happy enough to go out and have the bit of fun of saying a few Irish words rather than to be worrying about if I missed out on the wrong tense"* (Teacher 5: F: B1).

4.4 Language Management

The third tenet of Spolsky's Language policy model deals with language management. In this section respondents gave their knowledge, opinions and perceptions about how the Irish language is managed in the organised. It begins with ascertaining what knowledge stakeholders have of Government initiatives to promote the Irish language.

4.4.1 Government initiatives – knowledge and implementation.

Various Governmental policies since the inception of the State in 1923 have attempted to revive and maintain the Irish language, mainly through the education system (Darmody & Daly, 2015). The State assumes as its responsibility the allocation of state funds to promote the use of the Irish language.

4.4.1.1 The Education Act (1998).

Prior to the *Education Act* (1998) (Government of Ireland, 1998), it was largely the regulatory power of the Minister that governed the education sector and "this act is the first legislation of general application on the organisation of education in the State and covers primary, post-primary, vocational education and training, adult and continuing education and the inspectorate." (Ó Murchú, 2016).

Within this act there are several articles that refer to the Irish language. It was found in this study that while there was some knowledge of the *Education Act* (1998) amongst teachers, other participants were not aware of such an act believing *"you would need to be a teacher to know something like that"* (Parent 4: F: A1). Regarding references to the Irish language in the Act there was no knowledge apart from the Principal's comment who *"read about that in preparation for an interview for the job"* (Management 1: M: A2). Others were surprised that such a strong statement existed, claiming *"that's news to me"* (Teacher 2: M: A2). Obviously for teachers there was knowledge of the *Education Act (1998)* but they were unaware of the demands made about the Irish language.

4.4.1.2 The Official Language Act (2003).

The purpose of the *Official Languages Act* (2003) is to ensure that high quality services are widely available to the public through Irish and is the remit of the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment who are obligated to ensure the service is available. Teenagers reported knowing "nothing" about this Act while adult respondents were more knowledgeable yet hazy. Interestingly, one law case brought by a Romanian national, who was being convicted for a drunk driving offence, was released as he was not offered services through Irish when arrested. "*Even though he hadn't a word of Irish and still he got away without a fine or a sentence because of the Language Act. It's gas isn't it"* (Ancillary 1: M: A2). Others were aware that a service is offered in Irish and English prior to speaking to an employee in a state Department (Parent 3: M: N/A). Others were aware of the Act and that as a result there is now a Language commissioner (Parent1: M: B1). There were a number of references to the Irish Language Act in Northern Ireland due to publicity given to it in the media coinciding with this study causing one respondent to say that he knew "*nothing about the Official Language Act 2003 in the Republic but knew a lot more about the Irish language Act in Northern Ireland*." (Teacher 3: M: B2). This is of relevance as it highlights once again the power of publicity and how different language initiatives were highlighted and remembered by the community.

4.4.1.3 Irish as a working language of the European Union.

All participants were aware that Irish was a working language of the European Union, an accolade awarded in 2007. However, one irate parent commented that it was a "waste of taxpayers' money" translating documents to Irish that "*nobody is ever going to read*" (Parent 5: F: B1).

4.4.1.4 The 20-Year Strategy for the Irish language (2010-30).

The Irish Government published a major exercise in language policy and governance (Walsh, 2012) entitled *'20-Year strategy for the Irish language'* (Government of Ireland, 2010). According to Walsh (2012) this policy had *"the potential to create, for the first time ever, a professional and dynamic framework for the implementation of Irish Government policy on the Irish*

language" (Walsh, 2012, p. 339). Amongst the main aims of the strategy is to increase the numbers who use Irish in their lives. However, very few participants in this research had heard about the initiative despite it being seven years in operation. There were questions "*if it had started or is it over?*" (Ancillary 1: M: A2) or from the Irish language teacher "*I suppose I should know more about it but sometimes things are so busy*" (Teacher 6: F: C2). The students interviewed were oblivious to the existence of this policy, but they also were indifferent. Adults were surprised to hear that such a strategy existed. This is relevant because it appears that people do not hear about these Governmental initiatives when they do not directly impact on their lives. According to one immigrant parent the Government must "*want the people to speak the language if they are spending the money*" (Parent 3: M: N/A). However, he adds "*they must be doing something wrong when the people do not hear about it.*"

4.4.1.5 Bliain na Gaeilge (The Year of Irish) (2008).

The year 2018 was selected as '*Bliain na Gaeilge'* (Irish Year) where all citizens were asked to make a big effort to use and promote Irish language and Irish culture whenever and wherever they could. This study ceased collecting data in May 2018. As there were a lot of advertisements taking place regarding '*Bliain na Gaeilge'* and as it coincided with this project it was unsurprising to learn that most people were aware that it was Irish Year, but no one had taken part in any activity that was being promoted during the year. Those who did not hear about it were indifferent when they were informed during the interview. One parent explained, in what was a sarcastic tone, – "*we the people have not heard of it"* (Parent 4: F: A1). This comment may have been as a result of questions about different initiatives which she was unaware of.

4.4.1.6 Seachtain na Gaeilge (Irish Week)

Many participants had heard about '*Seachtain na Gaeilge*' (Irish Week) which is celebrated each year during St. Patrick's Day week. It receives a lot of publicity each year in the media and is endorsed by a wide variety of companies and by sports and music celebrities. A parent believed "*a week is*

not much for a language that is supposed to be our national language" (Parent 4: F: A1). During *Seachtain na Gaeilge*, which some interviewees thought *"was not strongly pushed in this place (the school)*" (Teacher 1: M: B1), it provided "*Irish people [with] a chance to show to themselves they have their own unique culture which we should be proud of."* (Teacher 1: M: B1). The same teacher said that he made "*some efforts during Seachtain na Gaeilge but not a lot."*

4.4.1.7 An Fáinne (The Ring).

Wearing a '*Fáinne'* (Irish Ring) has been a project organised by '*Gael Linn',* an organisation focused on the promotion of the Irish language. There are three lapel rings available, signifying your level of Irish (Gold, Silver or Bronze) and they also signify that the wearer is willing to speak Irish. Students in this study were unaware of such an initiative while only some of the adult respondents had knowledge of the '*Fáinne'*. One participant who was a strong advocate of this study admitted that she would not begin a conversation with a wearer of a *Fáinne* as she *"… might not have enough Irish to continue on with the conversation*" (Parent 1: M: B1) and interestingly she has self-reported a B1 on the CEFR before the interview commenced. Encouraging such emblems to indicate those who are willing to participate in the project may be a good area to begin with in a new language policy in broadening the use of the Irish language in the school.

4.4.1.8 An Gaelbhratach (Irish Flag) and Gaeilge 24 (Irish 24)

A Government lead initiative organised by '*Gael Linn'* is where a school applies to be considered for a *'Gaelbhratach'*- (an Irish Flag). Each year a *Gaelbhratach* is awarded to schools who promote the language outside the classroom. However, there was no knowledge of this initiative among any of the interviewees and the school had not applied to be considered.

The same was true for '*Gaeilge 24*', a charity event, where students pledge to speak Irish for 24 hours. Irish teachers said at a meeting that time constraints did not encourage them to apply for the Irish flag project (see Appendix R) while there were concerns regarding the aim of the charity

project *Gaeilge 24* which was to collect money for *Conradh na Gaeilge,* a governmental supported group responsible for the promotion of Irish.

4.4.1.9 Participants unaware of the Government initiatives discussed.

Findings from all the above indicate that while the Government may be spending money on the promotion of the language, the different initiatives are not having the desired effect in this community. Top down agenda are not always reaching grassroots levels. What seems to have been effective for the participants was the power of affective advertising on television, radio (to a lesser extent) and on internet sites (pop ups etc.).

Regardless of what the Government does or attempts to do, - one observation was that "*the Government can do little except bring forth policy and that it us, the people, who must act upon this*" (Teacher 2: M: A2). He explains further in the conversation that he believes;

> *"The language are the people and the people are the language. And it has to come from the ground up. And the language survives because of the people and maybe the people survive because of the language – it's just another string to your bow."* (Teacher 2: M: A2).

4.4.2 Governmental initiatives that were perceived to be beneficial.

4.4.2.1 Funding

When asked to forward their opinions on what the Government could do to promote the language - funding was the most commonly used word among the respondents. There were suggestions to "*fund trips to the Gaeltacht*" (Student J2: M: A2; Teacher 6: F: C2) where they would meet native speakers and get an opportunity to use Irish in its natural setting. Most replies regarding funding, however, were focused on the Irish television station. There were calls for more programmes that a student learning Irish, could benefit from (TY 4: F: B1). There were suggestions that more advertising campaigns would use Irish on the television, cinema, or internet. (TY 4: 4: B1). One interviewee could still recall some of the Irish slogans they used in television advertisements in the past. "Tóg sos. Tóg Kit Kat"

(Take a break. Take a Kit-Kat) advertising a chocolate bar and "*Tá siad ag teacht" [they are coming] advertising an alcoholic drink. Programmes on TG4 were described as "very inspirational.*" (Parent 1: M: B1). Programmes like "*Ross na Rún*" and the work TG4 have done with different sporting events through the medium of Irish (Provincial Rugby games, Wimbledon, Tour de France) were good opportunities to hear Irish. However, there was uncertainty as to how effective the language used was, as stated by a parent:

> *"I think they (Government) have done a lot by bringing along TG4 and programmes like Ros na Rún… seems to be quite well received by people watching it. It costs a lot … to broadcast football and on hurling days you will hear the medium of Irish being used for it. So, I think they are doing quite a lot. But is it reaching everyone? Probably not. With sports you are reaching people who will sit down and watch."* (Parent 1: M: B1).

All this exposure of the language *"keeping a certain amount of the language in the media helps keeping it in the public eye."* (Parent 2: M: A1). However, it was felt that the television station was a better source from which to learn Irish than the radio because *"on the radio … [they] will only turn it on and listen but if they have no Irish, they will not be able to understand it without any cues"* (Parent 1: M: B1).

Adults often mentioned Irish and bilingual road and street signage comparing Ireland to Wales one interviewee commented:

> *"because … when you go to Wales you notice the place names straight away because they are so different, and it makes you aware of the language so maybe they could do more about signage of place names. If they could softly do it through signposts through advertisements subtle rather than forced"* (Parent 2: M: A1).

Providing more funding to promote the language in school was mentioned. It was suggested that the Government should "*provide us with more resources and how about exchanges? Why would a student … ever learn Irish when they never have experienced it being spoken in a natural setting?"* (Teacher

6: F: C2). The same teacher envisaged a lot of community involvement where:

> *"…there needs to be a lot of subsidising done alongside this initiative in the community for example they need to fund classes – people should be encouraged to attend classes to learn or to brush up on what language they have. This also would make Irish a more social thing in their individual communities. It would make people learn language, use language, enjoy language in their own communities."* (Teacher 6: F: C2).

This echoed the sentiments expressed by a parent who said that:

> *"Maybe they could make it more accessible to the likes of me who would like to learn more if I had more of an opportunity. Perhaps they could do more in terms of adult learning [for those] who would like to go back and do a bit"* (Parent 1: M: B1).

The lack of knowledge of Governmental supportive initiatives to promote the Irish language was evident among participants and as one participant declared: "*I bet if you go downtown and ask the people, they will not know either*" (Ancillary 1: M: A1).

4.4.2.2 Make Irish a priority

There were two arguments forward for and against making Irish a priority. Against was the idea that it should not be a priority at present as the Government *"… need to get a lot more right before they focus on the language. The health services for example."* (Parent 4: F: A1). Those in favour of prioritising the language said, "*those naysayers claiming that the Government are spending so many millions on it and that that money could be put into better use like health and housing, but I think it is important"* (Parent 1: B: B1).

4.4.2.3 Using famous celebrities

During *Seachtain na Gaeilge* famous people assist in endorsing the Irish language and past promotional efforts have done likewise but they seem to

be inconsistent as indicated by an interviewee who;

> *"…remember(ed) the boxer who promoted the language a few years and of course Des Bishop but then they go …. It needs to be more consistent …… Ed Sheeran has translated one of his songs into Irish and this is great, but this needs to be consistent. Not just a once off. But more of interaction of this type using modern methodologies, modern stars that makes us see the language in use*" (Teacher 6: F: C2).

What is needed is *"…a serious campaign to get the people of Ireland to realise they have their own language and that it's on the brink of extinction. In the North of Ireland, they are after creating a new Gaeltacht but here we are struggling to keep one"* (Teacher 1: M: B1).

4.4.2.4 Create incentives

Rewards for students who learn the language should be used. There was a call for;

> *"bonus points for Irish and … as an Irish teacher and as a Guidance Counsellor [it is clear that] the lads are choosing honours Maths … because they want to get the 25 extra bonus points and are now doing ordinary level [Irish]. If the Government are serious about the Irish language perhaps, they should consider doing something like that so that would get students to focus on the Irish language. There needs to be some incentive … to learn Irish. There would be a huge uptake on Irish at higher level then"* (Teacher 6: F: C2).

For adults there are no incentives*: "The likes of ourselves (teachers) is there any incentive that would encourage us in schools to try and promote the language just as an ordinary teacher of a different subject? Is there anything in the community?"* (Teacher 5: F: B1).

4.4.2.5 Curricula modifications

There was mention of curriculum issues and a strong voice in support of curricular modification seeking a more modern approach to teaching the language. "*It has to be taken out of old Ireland and modernised*."

(Management 1: M: A2). These curricula and syllabi related issues relate to top-down initiatives where the school has little control over. However, there were strong opinions forwarded by participants about their experiences with the Irish syllabus. There was a strong criticism of rote learning where students are required to learn from long Irish texts in order to gain top marks in state examinations (see discussion above 4.3.3.2). It was evident that participants were not happy with the way in which Irish was being taught today.

Most of the criticism was focused on the absence of a communicative approach in the classroom. "*In class if we did more speaking and less reading and writing and then we might be able to speak it."* (Student S5: F: B2). Having a reason to learn the language would assist the students in preparing for an event as highlighted in this reply:

> *"In class there should be more talking and less writing and if we knew we were going to use it somewhere like Petersburg (an outdoor pursuit centre who provide an Irish language service) then we would probably be more likely to listen and use it and learn it"* (Student Y4: F: A1).

The Principal of the school would like to see a pilot programme where;

> *"the examination element is taken away from it (Irish syllabus) and see how that would go or perhaps some pilot programme in Transition Year. But it would be interesting if a project could follow the progress of students for the whole five years putting a focus on the cultural aspect of the language as well as the language itself. They would go to theatre, to the go to the Gaeltacht, do Irish as an experimental subject. Have native Irish speakers coming into the school as guest speakers. Have other guest speakers, in relation to the Irish language. They would do Irish music, Irish dancing"* (Management 1: M: A2).

4.4.4 Bottom up initiatives perceived that could assist.

4.4.4.1 Perception of what an individual can do.

SPEAK IRISH: The Irish proverb "Beatha teanga í a labhairt" (The life of a language is to speak it) was mentioned by a few who realise that if each

person uses some language it will assist with the aims of this proposed initiative.

Having been exposed to the Irish language since primary school, except for those born and/or educated outside of the state, there should be some knowledge of the language. The principal believed that:

> *"all … teachers, would have some Irish …(and) would have learned Irish in school so … once we start to use it again a lot would come back to us and it would start to come out. People would start to talk it. And I think that you would start … throwing in comments"* (Management 1: M: A2).

It was clear from these interviews that participants who liked Irish were more confident to use it and more willing to assist with the aims of the project. Those who were negative towards the language and had not mastered any oral language skills, or at the most had basic skills, could not envisage this project in the school. One student believed that "*a teacher would cooperate depending on whether or not they liked Irish or not*" (Student 4Y: F: A1), or it would depend on whether "*they were good at Irish or not and I suppose some are good and some are not*" (Student 6Y: F: B1).

USE A LITTLE EVERYDAY: A teacher believed they "*could use a little in their classroom*", possibly a designated day once a week "*where we would all make a bigger effort to use more Irish*" (Teacher 2: M: A2). He envisaged that it was possible to use Irish when speaking to:

> *"… the girls in the office. Even 'slán' [goodbye] 'agus go raibh maith agat '[and thank you] on the way out. Just greet them – students on the corridor in Irish. Ask them about the football match or something like that as Gaeilge* [in Irish]."

HAVE A CATCH PHRASE: To use more elaborate Irish language this teacher also suggested that all teachers have one thing that they would use while teaching. For example – in his subject area if he wanted his students to draw a line, a command he uses often that could be his catch phrase "*Tarraing líne idir dhá phointe*" (draw a line between two points). At other

phases of this project he suggested he would teach them the Irish for all the shapes: "*cearnóg*" [square] etc. (Teacher 2: M: A2); this is how he would cooperate and contribute to broadening the use of Irish.

MUST HAVE AN INCENTIVE: There needed to be a reason to get involved in this project for many interviewees. One participant wanted to know "*what's in it for me."* (Ancillary 1: M: A2). After reflection he said that he "*would be able to encourage [his] son and family to speak and…it would be of benefit to me just for that."* (Ancillary: M: A1). Students in the Senior Cycle (fourth, fifth and sixth-year students) would benefit from such a project as they were more focused on an oral Irish examination at the end of the sixth year. Teachers also indicated that they would need to see some advantage in doing this extra work. *"… it would depend on how staff want to benefit from it. I think staff … would promote the language if they had a framework and perhaps some encouragement to do it. It would make them better Irish speakers, make them more aware*." (Teacher 3: M: B2).

IRISH IN THE LANGUAGE LANDSCAPE**:** The individual can do much to improve the language landscape in the organisation and bring about change. One teacher commented:

> *"… even walking through the school today … you can walk the corridors without seeing anything written in Irish. No signage, nothing in relation to the language…I often thought every classroom in the school could have two or three Irish posters that might just promote the language. Regardless of whether it's a history class or maths class that just says this corner of this classroom is about our language*" (Teacher 3: M: B2).

Simple suggestions were forwarded to improve the use of Irish outside of the classroom. There are noticeboards for all different aspects of school life. However, photographic evidence indicates that Irish does not feature much in the print-rich visual environment. Suggestions recorded in the observational diary focused on *"… labelling everything professionally around the school*" and suggesting that all bilingual signage have distinguished script/font for the Irish word as opposed to the English word/phrase. By

having professionally designed signage it would be taken more seriously and would probably look better. This was supported by a teacher who said she envisioned having *"little words on the blackboard. … the Irish equivalent underneath that [reference to words] and then it becomes more natural that it is not just in the Irish room"* (Teacher 5: F: B1). Another commented saying:

> "*A series of bilingual posters would be a start. Or I would go to a teacher Irish teacher and I would say I need to know these five or six things that I use all the time and try and incorporate them. … that would work. Give it to them in two languages there is a chance they will remember it in one of them (laugh)."* (Teacher 2: M: A2).

ROLE MODELS: Having role models would to be influential to younger students. There was a belief that if more teachers used Irish and if;

> *"more senior students were to speak to each other in Irish that would have an impact on other students to follow suit and start speaking to each other. We need to see more senior students using Irish in the school"* (Teacher 6: F: C2).

The buddy system where students are paired up in order to facilitate junior students settling into the school was mentioned as a framework that would enhance the use of Irish in the school. This was supported by those who envisaged *"… teachers asking or organising students to have a buddy who they would speak Irish to. It would not have to be much, but I bet you would hear more around the school if this was to happen*" (Ancillary 1: M: A2). He asked later *"could TY students be teaching First years and creating Irish buddy system"* (Ancillary 1: M: A2). This could be further expanded to increase the use of Irish in the school by creating a binary system where;

> *"… one person picks two people that they choose to speak Irish to and that each one of them would pick two others they would speak to (i.e. you would have three people who you choose to communicate in Irish as far as possible) and this effect would make a lot of people speak Irish. The binary effect is what it is called I think – perhaps that this could be used in this school even."* (Teacher 6, F: C2).

If everyone was to participate their experiences with the Irish language;

> *"…would be better. The language would seem a better and more natural part of their life. For some students it would help them get better grades in their exams, but I think students sometimes think that Irish is something that they do between 10:30 and 11:00 and that's it. And I will be back again tomorrow. Whereas if it [was] everywhere you go … (to) the canteen, in the corridor, in the classroom, in the dressing rooms, it is then more part of your life"* (Teacher 3: M: B2).

4.4.4.2 Perceptions of what groups could do

PLANNED INTERVENTION: Emphasis was placed on the pace at which a policy should be introduced. It was believed that such a language intervention required a slow and planned approach. Planning to commence the year before its introduction and perhaps to start the initiative with the new first year students only. For staff there were fears that "*this cannot be landed on us overnight*." (Conversation with Art teacher recorded in observational diary). It was suggested that a project be commenced for transition year students to have an "*Irish language buddy*" that would benefit the use of the language, the standard of Irish for first and for transition year students.

COMMITTEE: There were many suggestions from participants to form a committee. "*Not just Irish teachers but all those who would be interested in pushing the language… a good committee with teachers of all sort of departments on board… and I would be interested in being involved in such a committee*" (Ancillary 1: M: A2), and the committee members must be "*committed to this idea and who understand what we are trying to do*" (Teacher 6: F: C2). There were calls for "*…management to be on board … to form a committee who are committed to this idea and who understand what we are trying to do*" (Teacher 6: F: C2). The "*committee could … come up with ideas of how we could make the Irish language more visible around the school*" (Teacher 1: M: B1).

LANGUAGE CIRCLES: Creating language circles were mentioned by several teachers interviewed as a new Irish teacher created a;

> *"ciorcal comhrá"(language circle)…once a week some time back … we gathered around a table and had a conversation in Irish at break time … I liked the opportunity to exercise the bit of blas [dialect] and I suppose if it was something that had continued, I suppose I would have improved. It was nice to be conversing in something you had learned"* (Teacher 2: M: A2).

The initiative was called "*Bord na Gaeilge"* (the Irish table or the Irish board). It was a humorous name, as "*Bord na Gaeilge*" was the name of a former state funded organisation responsible for promoting Irish (now "*Foras na Gaeilge*).

STUDENT COUNCIL/CLUBS ETC: For the student population, the student council "*could extend their role and … some students are good at Irish and they could start a small club, Irish only club*" (Ancillary 1: M: A2). Setting up Irish clubs or societies was mentioned by many as a way of encouraging the use of Irish:

> *"…an Irish club for junior students and another for senior students. I say separately because I think it would be better if they were to talk to their own age group. I think the Leaving Cert would welcome such a thing as it would help them with their exams and the junior certs might enjoy the fun of it and to be honest it would give them something to do at lunch time"* (Teacher 4: F: A1).

And at another stage she also believed that:

> "*… if we could have a club Gaeilge at lunch time. I think getting students on board we will need teachers and there are definitely teachers on staff who are non-Irish speakers and don't teach Irish, but I know would love to get involved someway"* (Teacher 6: F: C2).

Suggestions were made to *"have lunch time competitions in Irish. You won't get everyone on board at the beginning it would …. like everything … it has to be happening a while before it becomes part of daily 'ins and outs' here"* (Ancillary 1: M: A2). Another initiative mentioned was that of the '*Pop-up Gaeltacht'* where "*there could be an area in the school where students could*

come together like a Gaeltacht area where students wanted to use the Irish lunch time or break time could sit and use the language at that particular time" (Teacher 3: M: B2).

DEPARTMENT POLICY: It was suggested that *"… each department in the school should and could have a policy in relation to the Irish language indeed there could be one Irish language policy in the school and how that could be incorporated into the life of the school.*" (Teacher 6: F: C2).

The Principal envisaged the Irish language being used more in;

> *"PE and sports classes where it is non-structured … what I do when I go into a classroom I might say: 'Dia duit' or 'go raibh maith agat' (God Bless or Thank You) or something. They could use Irish in a subtle way rather than "trying to come in all guns blazing"* (Management 1: M: A2).

INVOLVE HOME: Involving the home in the project was deemed an important component of the work where suggestions were made to send work home, to have assistance available on the school website where parents could learn;

> *"certain vocabulary in the home... it would be very simple things like asking parents to use simple phrase…and start off with even English phrases with Irish words put in. Because you must remember there are a lot of people how have no Irish or have little Irish and are not Irish speakers…. send home a weekly notice as to what the words or phrases of the week were"* (Management 1: M: A2).

It was thought that parents would see it as advantageous: "*anything that will help the students to learn anything and that it is not forced down their throat*" (Ancillary 1: M: A2). The Principal viewed such a project as an opportunity where "*we could get the parents council on board … we do not use their input enough and they fear their only role is to fundraise. But this is something they could do*." However, he was cautious and commented that it did;

> "*… depend on who is on it (the parents council)… and it would be interesting to find out if they would help to encourage more use of the*

language in school but others, whose sons or daughters who are slow learners … it might frighten them … unless it was done very well."

He was concerned as well, asking if *"… someone who just comes in from Europe or Pakistan are they expected to do this?"* (Management 1: M: A2).

4.4.4.3 Perceptions of what management could do to assist

COMMITTEES: As all teachers in the organisation have learned Irish in their own education the principal believed it would come back to them again once they started using it. However, he was not in favour of creating committees saying;

> *"I am a firm believer that a camel was a horse designed by a committee", believing that a committee was not essential in "… a whole school approach. You would start with the Irish Department but then … bringing in other areas (like) PE and sports where it is non-structured"* (Management 1: M: A2).

LEADERSHIP REQUIRED: However, others believed that committees would be important in such an intervention, needing. *"… a lot of approval and planning from the Principal down. He should be pushing it maybe. Or a committee who would be interested"* (Ancillary1: M: A2). There was a belief that this initiative, like any other, must be led by the school managers and "*it must come from the top*" (Teacher 5: F: B1). A teacher involved in school planning said that it should be addressed;

> *"First, at school level … this has to be driven from the top – the management of the school must say that we are going to promote the Irish language this year and we are going to participate in a different number of projects and we want everyone to come on board regardless of your level. I think it cannot be a threat. The school has to say the school has to value this"* (Teacher 3: M: B1).

Moreover, another advocating that "*a huge support of senior management, principal and deputy principal" was needed and a "huge amount of work for a year before implementing it"* (Teacher 4: F: B1). This information stems from the fact that teachers fear that "*so many initiatives have been tried in the*

past but were not at all successful …they were not planned." (Colleagues in conversation about the title of the study).

There seemed to be a belief that such interventions were best supported by school management rather than coming from the Department of Education and Skills or any other Governmental agency. Due to the increased pressure being placed on teachers, students and parents from changing curricula there is a lot of stress amongst staff as articulated by one staff member;

> *"… I don't think anything else coming from the department is going to sell because there is so much coming from there. So maybe if each school had a certain idea, consultation with staff, how we could develop the Irish language in schools. Little things we could do, and I mean little things. Signs here and there, general questions if a student wanted to go to a class - if they wanted to go up and see a teacher. There should be a way if they ask me in Irish, I will consider it"* (Teacher 1: M: B1).

EMPLOY PERSONEL: To embed this project it was suggested that management recruit employees who would be favourable to such a project. Not necessarily fluent, but with a positive attitude towards the Irish language. Suggestions were made that a person should be employed who would have the skill and the time to promote the language as the staff are under pressure with new curricular changes at present. Another suggested selecting a person with a post of responsibility for the task of recruiting. The principal said that this was not possible as the posts of responsibilities he advertises must be open to all teachers on staff and not everyone would be fluent Irish speakers.

Staff meeting notes highlight that the school had a consultation and a review of the posts of responsibility in the school in May 2017. A study of these notes indicated that the Irish language did not feature as a priority for school improvement and there was no suggestion made by teachers or students in the survey administered that the Irish language be considered as a priority within the school. (Appendix S)

REWARD SYSTEM: Management could support the reward systems proposed by interviewees. At present the school focuses on rewarding students for exemplary behaviour and work and students receive bonus points, as opposed to penalty points for unacceptable behaviour. Therefore, there were many comments to support the notion that a reward system would work in promoting the use of Irish outside the classroom. There was a belief that it was a good ploy to *"… reward students who make an effort to communicate in Irish."* (Teacher 3: M: B2). Rewards come in many guises from simple words of praise to receiving bonus points on the school's VSware system. A parent commented that *"perhaps it could be done something like the penalty points system…or perhaps if you gave your order in the canteen you got served faster or anything that a tangible value could be seen to it or … maybe 10% off for ordering your food in Irish"* (Parent 5: F: B1).

4.4.4.4 It must be fun.

Regardless of who is responsible or who attempts the promotion of the language, this study highlighted that to aid a school community to incorporate the Irish language as a school language policy there must be a focus on fun. This was evident not only in teenager replies but also in adult responses as they reflected on reasons why they may wish to return to learning and using more Irish. The focus on fun highlights two points. First, that learning a language must be an enjoyable experience which makes it easier to learn the language and two, that there is an underlying thought that Irish is not necessary for communication so any use of it must be for entertainment purposes. Respondents believed that there must be more use of;

> *"… a céilí [Irish folk dancing] or that kind of think 'isteach is amach' [in and out] and … we used to have such fun with that …with "ar chlé and ar dheis" [to the left and to the right] and … listening and using language without knowing you are using it. Just the fun of it. People think that kids would not want to do this, but we were kids and we loved*

this fun. When people get together, they can have fun using Irish" (Parent 5: F: B1).

Adults also believed that any attempt to return to the classroom to learn more Irish in the future *"… it would need to be fun" (Parent 2: M: A1), "it would have to have some craic in it*" (Parent 5: F: B1). Students might join Irish clubs and societies if there was some fun involved and "*might enjoy the fun of it.*" (Teacher 4: F: A1). The student voice claimed, "*some students … would love it and find it fun and I suppose it would be challenge*" (Student Y5: F: A1). An Irish teacher, who worked on Irish summer courses for ten years, claimed that students who were using the language every day on the course *"… loved it - they loved having fun with it they loved speaking it to the locals*" (Teacher 6: F: C2). To encourage the learning of Irish *"… they need the fun and the craic so it would have to be something like a céile, the music, the games and the craic. … I think … what we do would have to be fun*" (Teacher 6: F: C2). Irish should be *"… introduced softly with fun and music maybe. Get them using it without them knowing it because now there is such an amount of information being received, I'm sure if a plan was clever*" (Ancillary 1: M: A2).

A parent witnessed how change of language policy in her son's primary school impacted on his level of Irish. There was a marked improvement when the focus was on making the learning of Irish;

> *"… fun and … the infants are like sponges and they learn everything when encouraged the right way. Slowly introduce it and even before they got the whole way up the older kids were looking at the small ones speaking Irish to each other and they were interested, and they started speaking more of it than they used to. My own son came into the school when he was eight without a word and within two years, he was amazing at Irish in the school yards speaking to everyone."* (Parent 6: F: A2).

4.4.5 Perceived advantages

There were realistic realisations that there would be some who would like the challenge of such an initiative for either intrinsic or extrinsic reasons or

others who would not for a variety of reasons. Students commented that *"some students would love it and find it fun and … it would be a challenge*" (Student Y5: F: B1), while it is suspected that "*it would be good for some people and others would be fed up with it"* (Student J1: A1). However, there was a consensus that it would give an opportunity to all to practice and exercise whatever language they had learned. While it was as an initiative directed at the student population, it became apparent that it was for everyone;

> *"Not just students but all those who would be interested in … the language … I would be interested in being involved in such a committee. …. Just an interest in learning Irish. Maybe then I would be able to encourage my son and family to speak … but now it would be of benefit to me"* (Ancillary 1: M: A2).

One interviewee also believed that "*parents would see it as advantageous …anything that will help the students to learn anything …and that it is not forced down their throat.*" (Ancillary 1: M: A2). Parents could, indeed, be benefactors insofar as:

> *"some would be helping their kids with the homework and they might have a more positive attitude towards the language. I would not expect that we would turn our school into a bilingual school or anything like that, but I do think we have an obligation to raise awareness"* (Teacher 3: M: B2).

A conversation with a teacher regarding the proposed project also indicated that she saw it as an opportunity to improve her Irish skills which she said were very low.

The importance of being exposed to the language more often than they are at present appealed to many interviewees:

> *"if they hear it and use the odd word, they might not use a full sentence for two years but when they do, they will have spent time without knowing it I suppose structuring the language in their minds*" (Parent 6: F: B1)

An immigrant parent believed in the value of exposure as he learned English and Italian saying:

> *"… yes, it is so much easier when you are hearing it all the time and you are seeing all the language around you and you are trying every day to say something…you are listening carefully*" (Parent 3: M: N/A).

It was viewed as a natural approach to language learning. "*If you are hearing it more often and even every day, I think that negativity might not be there …It would be more normal if they hear a lot of people speaking it"* (Parent: 4: F: A1). When they don't hear Irish often, they view it *"… as a subject rather than a language for communication purposes"* (Teacher 3: M: B2).

This more natural informal approach to learning might instil a love of the language in students;

> *"Because when they finish their Leaving Certificate and have done Irish and if they are not going to study Irish after that, well that's it, they might not come across it again in their lives so if they were able to speak it or even if they had the confidence to use it in the community I think they would use it but, as it is they leave and they can't speak it and a lot of them have a bad feeling about it. They must like it. They must have some grá (love) for it"* (Parent 1: M: B1).

Another advantage of such an endeavour is that the repetitive practice would make it more acceptable:

> *"Initially they may not like it but like everything else they would become accustomed to it. The more they got used to it, for example if it was to be done every Friday or whenever they would become more used to it and I think it would be good for them because without knowing it they would be learning how to listen to Irish when they are not expecting it and I think that is a good thing. One morning a week for example"* (Parent 4: F: A1).

If Irish was spoken more frequently in the school environment by more people, and spoken in different contents, then it would become the norm and initially students, "*… would wonder what's wrong with her … but I think if I*

[spoke Irish] more often they would not pay any heed to it – it's about familiarity." (Teacher 5: F: B1).

The Principal could also see how it would become a habit, a custom:

> *"I do think if it became an everyday event and you were to meet somebody on the corridor you would probably start talking using simple greetings and then it probably would work"* (Management 1: M: A2).

It would be advantageous for examination purposes as stated by one interviewee *"if they could see the benefit of it and even if they could see the academic benefit of it. I don't think it has to be a bribery … Irish is worth 40% in the oral examination"* (Teacher 4: F: A1). *"For some students it would help them get better grades in their exams*" (Teacher 3: M: B2). Others commented that *"If you were hearing it more often and even every day, I think that negativity might not be there …It would be more normal if they hear a lot of people speaking it"* (Parent 4: F: A1).
Another advantage of this initiative is that it scaffolds the work done in the Irish classroom as discussed above (4.3.4.5). Language used in the Irish classroom could be used around the school environment.

There were concerns that school stakeholders would be forced into cohesion. It was important that *"you would not make someone learn the language, just promote the language and make it understandable to the people why it is important to the people that we have Irish."* (Parent 3: M: N/A). Not forcing the acquisition of the language but using *"an Irish sentence, or a word when discussing something … is a good idea"* (Parent 3: M: N/A). This parent believed it be a more natural way of acquiring a second language: *"If all teachers would [use some Irish] it would be easier for the students. They would not be expecting it. It would go back into their head [he puts both hands to the back of his head]"* indicating that language learning would take place in a different part of the brain.

For those who would experience some language anxiety such a subtle approach would be welcomed, *"it would be great to use Irish but not so formally. And it did not matter about the little bit of English through it.*

Because that is what we do at home. You would not have full sentences, but you would have words as such" (Teacher 5: F: B1).

It was suggested that with such an intervention, if done carefully, could have a ripple effect in that students would hear teachers using the language more, senior students may be heard conversing on occasion *"speaking it more and being the role models for the younger students. You are going to pick it up and the grammar will come"* (Parent 6: F: B1).

4.4.6 Perceived disadvantages of the intervention

One of the perceived disadvantages of the intervention is the possible exclusion of those students who do not study Irish. As already mentioned above (see 4.2.5.3) there were concerns from the principal as to how to include those students in the project. Understandably, it would be difficult for certain members of the school community especially those who were born outside of Ireland and/or for those who have been exempt from doing Irish due to having educational psychological reports. It was unimaginable for some to speak Irish to others and students reported:

> *"… most students find Irish hard and I know I would be afraid to be the one to start talking in Irish because there might be someone in the group who is good at Irish and they would start correcting me or ask me what are you saying … in case I get it wrong"* (Student Y4: F: A1).

Similarly, staff stated that *"…. I can't image speaking to the cleaners. Imagine the response I would get from Amy if I asked her to clean room 12 in Irish. I would have to run for cover [laugh]"* (Ancillary 1: M: A2). Amy (not her real name), a cleaner each evening in the school, was known for her quick and fiery temper.

Negative attitudes and a lack of willingness to do something about the Irish language were alluded to by others and there was a belief that by;

> *"… putting up posters around the school, it may not make our students more competent at the language, but they are the parents of tomorrow. And it's the attitude that needs to change and the Irish language need to be pearl of state and us saying what are we doing here, and*

something must be done but what is lacking is the willingness to do it." (Teacher 3: M: B2).

Even a fear of speaking Irish at the risk of being ridiculed was mentioned by several interviewees. A student commented that he *"… doubt(s) if [his] friends would speak Irish to each other unless the teachers makes us in the Irish classroom, but I don't know would they use it at lunch time or break time."* (Student Y3: M: A2). While another concurs with this statement saying, *"the lads would not like to do that because they would be laughing about you if you tried and especially if you were no good"* (Student Y: M: A1). One teacher suggestion that a solution to this would be;

> *"If [a person] could go somewhere with people who are as raw or as out of touch … you could build the confidence to use it and not to be going 'ah look at our grammar and look at this that and the other' then it might come back and … as well as that people would have to want it. And there are a lot of people who probable don't want it [Irish]"* (Teacher 5: F: B1).

As Irish is rarely, if ever, used outside the classroom there is no real awareness of what level they are at. One reply stated that she *"doesn't ever use it [Irish]"* (Parent 4: F: A1) and claims her *"level of Irish would be very poor."*

There is evidence of some anxiety demonstrated through shyness, fear, and discomfort which could be a hindrance in attempting to introduce such a project. This has been discussed earlier (4.2.5.1). The school's secretary (in an exchange recorded in the observational diary) expressed concern that she would have to use Irish on the intercom stating *"… you have no idea how bad I am at Irish."*

Other disadvantages have been discussed above. Time constraints for doing extra work or the time constraints to embed such a language policy have already been highlighted (see 4.3.4.3). No incentives to learn were referred to above (4.4.2.4).

Another fear expressed was that so many initiatives in the past were not successful because first of all, not enough planning was done and secondly, not all people in the school bought into the concept because either they were not interested or they had not received enough information that would entice them to implement the initiative. So, a careful approach as discussed is important. The fear was that it would be given lip service and as the Principal asserts:

> *"the fear that I would have is that I would say to the group the next time you are doing your plans put Irish in it. The fear that I would have would be going back to my experience of Irish in college. They would say … he wants us to put a paragraph in about the Irish language so we will do. Then they would do nothing about it - just put it in the policy. The kids would not see that this was in the policy"* (Management 1, M: A2).

This was also echoed in comments made about planning that it was their experience that many other projects had failed in the school due to poor planning. Planning a project is critical to the success of any intervention and often students are not included.

There were fears that it would be costly to implement if done properly. One comment said: *"if we want to promote the language then ye will have to do something big*" and it was interesting to note that this individual did not envisage himself taking part (recorded in the observational diary).

It was believed that Irish is a difficult language to learn and that this is disadvantageous. Irish *"… needs to be dumbed down, and this will annoy the puritans, but it needs to be made as simple as possible and simply and houses that are fluent will say what kind of gibberish is this"* (Parent 5: F: B1).

As discussed earlier the importance of having a reference in the school mission statement, from which all the work of the school radiates, is paramount. However, no such reference to language or culture exists in this organisations mission statement at present. (See 4.3.2.1)

4.4.8 Conclusion

This chapter, on the findings drawn from the data that addressed the research questions and sub-questions, has outlined participants' views about their Irish language knowledge, their ideologies in relation to the language and their perceptions about the Irish language could be broadened in the organisation. Strongly evident throughout the data, was the support for the proposed initiative but on a very superficial level. Irish was seen as a marker of identity but the 'cúpla focal" was deemed to be enough to mark their Irish identity. While supportive it became evident that such an initiative would require a lot of support and scaffolding from within and outside of the organisation.

Spolsky's Language Policy Model was used as a framework for eliciting relevant information from stakeholders in an investigation into a proposal of broadening the use of Irish, both oral and visual, in the school community. However, as the data was being analysed from the knowledge, perceptions and ideas being forwarded the researcher felt that the data was more descriptive than prescriptive. In the literature review reference had been made to the concept of community of practice and social theory and the data would benefit from being viewed through this philosophical lens. The following chapter discusses the findings from not only the Language Policy perspective but also will include how the theory of Social Learning and in particular the Community of Practice framework illuminates the data.
The findings are discussed further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

"Tell me and I'll forget.
Show me and I may remember.
Involve me and I learn".
Benjamin Franklin

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented the findings from data drawn from interviews, observational data and from photographic evidence in one school community. Using Spolkey's Language Policy as a framework it afforded an opportunity to research the phenomena under the headings of language ecology, language attitudes and beliefs and language management. However, it became apparent that using Spolsky's Language Policy Model was enlightening regarding what a policy on the broadening of the Irish language could look like but that from interpreting the data it was evident that there was more involved in policy formation than what the data initially forwarded. The case study data came from those involved in teaching, learning and policy making within the organisation, from students in different year groups, from parents from a variety of backgrounds, and ancillary staff in the organisation. While there was support for maintaining and using the Irish language, there was also an obvious gap between this support and their concern in relation to their willingness to communicate in the language. More importantly there was a sense that stakeholders were at sea insofar as there was an array of Irish language competencies and various attitudes and beliefs about the Irish langauge, both positive and negative, but there was an absence of vision and leadership that would enable them to move from their present stance if so willing. It became clear that any proposed initiatives would more likely have effect within the framework of a community of practice.

This research asks what possibilities and prospects there were of stakeholders making more use of the Irish language in the school environment. There was ample evidence that they were unaware of the

requirements of the Education Act (1998) that requires all schools to engage with, and promote, the Irish language at every available opportunity.

In an endeavour to encourage stakeholders to use Irish outside of the Irish language classroom it requires an increase in aptitudes, changes in attitudes, a shift in motivational factors, and the ability to adapt within the culture of the community (Ames and Ames, 1989). To enable us to study the phenomena and ascertain the outcome of such a process we must view the Irish language as a practical concrete object and this then becomes the unit of analysis (Saljo, 2007). This concept assisted me to realise that while I had been attempting to understand how the principles of language policy could be employed under the Spolsky's language policy lens, I was struggling to illuminate different aspects of what was needed to suggest policy. To fully capture the findings from this research it would benefit from examination through a different philosophical lens. Encouragement to do so was provided in the words of Bruner who said;

> "The study of the human mind is so difficult, so caught in the dilemma of being both the object and the agent of its own study that it cannot limit its inquiries to ways of thinking that grew out of yesterday's physics. Rather, the task is so compellingly important that it deserves all the rich variety of insight that we can bring to the understanding of what man makes of his world, of his fellow beings, and of himself. That is the spirit in which we should proceed" (Bruner, 1990, p. xiii).

The realization that a study of the human mind is difficult and that to view the knowledge forwarded by individuals should be scrutinized using a different lens – this reexamination of the data, from a different lens, will offer another perspective. Social Learning theory and Community of Practice theory were mentioned in the literature review but it was only when the data had been discussed in Chapter 4 that it became apparent that the study would benefit from this more prescriptive rather than descriptive account the thesis demanded.

At this stage of the research I still wished to investigate what elements within this community would allow and encourage an individual in the organisation

to use the Irish language. Spolsky's language policy framework assisted in eliciting information from stakeholders. Using interview data and data from observational and photographic data, I sought a method of interpreting the data of community views in which to frame the inquiry. Having studied the theory of Situated Learning, based on Lave and Wenger's work (1991) and of Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice (CoP) I believed the wide scope of those theories would enabled me to view the data from a different perspective using those philosophical lens.

I was attracted to the concept of a CoP as it identifies a social grouping, not in virtue of shared abstract characteristics (gender or class) or simple co-presence, even though it is evident that the study is in relation to a school: the focus is on shared practice. In the course of regular joint activity, a community of practice develops ways of doing things, views, values, and ways of thinking. Two conditions are crucial for a CoP: shared experience over time and a commitment of shared understanding. As it is envisaged that the students would be the main benefactors of the outcome of broadening the Irish langauge, it was of interest to note how Wenger viewed models of CoP in the education sphere. Wenger's model of CoP reminds us that:

> "Students go to school and as they come together to deal in their own fashion with the agenda of the imposing institution and the unsettling mysteries of youth, communities of practice sprout everywhere, in the classroom as well as on the playground, officially or in the cracks. And despite curriculum, discipline, and exhortation, the learning that is most personally transformative turns out to be the learning that involves membership in these communities of practice" (Wenger, 1998, p. 6).

On analysing the data, it became apparent that each person had a different way of interpreting how the language could be promoted in the school and that that this perspective was influenced by their own individual community (or indeed communities) of practice. Indeed, it was also noted that a CoP in which the Irish language would be used more widely would not occur organically and would require support, encouragement and planning.

5.2 Community of practice

If everyone was to participate it was thought that their experience with the Irish language; "…*would be better. The language would seem a better and more natural part of their life*" (Teacher 3, M: B2). This comment also echoes the process of joint enterprise where people work together towards a common goal. Wenger says that these enterprises create mutual accountability, which plays a central role in members attempting to seek new meanings.

Regarding shared repertoire, which represents the common resources that members of a community need to negotiate meaning, Wenger identifies that mastery of these dimensions results in a "locally negotiated regime of competence" (Wenger, 1998, p. 137).

A CoP is a group of learners who are in the process of learning something new. There are three characteristics inherent to all CoP (Domain, Community and Practice). The domain of a CoP describes the topic of interest that is shared by the group which in this case study would be use of the Irish language. The community comprises the shared discussions and interactions members have around the domain. The practice describes the tools, strategies, ideas and results of the shared actions of the community. There are many strengths to this approach to constructivist teaching. A CoP is formed by a group endeavouring to learn the same thing by working together, sharing research and discussing the construction of knowledge for themselves. How feasible the suggested intervention would be in a rural community school in the west of Ireland is at the heart of this enquiry.

This case study collected and analysed data from various stakeholders in this community. Apparently, daily use of Irish, outside of the Irish langauge classroom, is only between the Irish language teachers. Only one person in the organisation is a native speaker and there are five other teachers who have a good command of the language and can converse in Irish when they need or wish to. However, the school is not situated in an Irish speaking area. Therefore, the focus of the study was to ascertain how feasible it was

to create a CoP where the use of the Irish language would be the central domain. What is of importance in such a model of learning is that the students (all people in the community) are learners of the Irish language, no matter how small the contribution or learning is.

In an English medium post-primary school context, there is no readily available Irish language speech community to practice or use the language learned in the classroom. Creating a learning community of practice, where the focus would be on broadening the use of Irish in the school community outside of the Irish classroom, would be of benefit to teenagers and adults alike. It would be of benefit to students who are studying the language and preparing for state examinations in the language and it would be of benefit for adults creating an opportunity to learn, practice and/or improve their own linguistic skill if they so wish.

While Spolsky's language policy model forwarded practical recommendations, using Wegner's CoP policy as a framework from which to view the data gives the opportunity to examine our ways of being in relation to the Irish language. Our institutions or policies can only meet the needs of the people if they understand, and be part of, a community of practice where Irish is seen as being relevant. While Spolsky's framework assisted in how best to behave, to do, to enact a broader use of the language, Wenger's conceptual framework focuses on the understanding of the meaning of what is actually taking place (or their perceptions of what could take place) and understanding the community that would be involved in the practice itself. Interpreting the data using Wenger's theoretical framework yields a different perspective shifting focus from viewing the case study as an investigation of policy or practice, to an investigation to probe deeper and to view the findings from the social learning perspective (See Figure 5.1). I was also spurred by the fact that I was an inside researcher and by using another theoretical perspective it enabled me to view, examine and analyse the data differently. While the initial proposals offered recommendations of how to broaden the use of the Irish language in the community, the later interpretation focused more on understanding the stakeholders in the

organisation through the concept of social learning and as members of a community of practice.

Wenger explains;

> "Most communities of practice do not have a name and do not issue membership cards. Yet, if we care to consider our life from that perspective for a moment, we can all construct a fairly good picture of the communities of practice we belong to now, those we belonged to in the past and those who we would like to belong to in the future" (Wenger, 1998, p. 7).

The data gathered in this study focused on language knowledge, language acquisition and language use and it was insightful. Research questions regarding their attitudes and beliefs about the Irish language enlightened the case study as to how they viewed the Irish language. However, using Wegner's social learning theory, the data now revealed how much meaning was attached to the language and to the extent the Irish language played a role in their lives. Enquiring about possible interventions (both macro and micro interventions) gave an inkling if they could visualise participating in a CoP that would use the Irish language or indeed their envisaged role in such a community. I was cognisant of the fact that each contributor to this case study had been impacted by current practice and historical perspectives that influenced where, when, why, and how people should learn Irish. There were variations in the responses of adults as opposed to student because they had different lived experiences. The adults spoke about a more stringent routine of acquisition whereas the teenagers spoke in a mellow tone expressing feelings on a moderate level from boredom to fun. A tone that was evident from all stakeholders was that there was no urgency with this endeavour. There were expressions, implicit and explicit, that indicated that this was not a priority.

Figure 5. 1 Components of a social theory of learning (Wenger, 1998, p. 5)

While the recommendations of this case study initially were focused on how to develop a broader use of Irish, the Wenger framework has cast a deeper perspective on the data and suggests that there is a bigger concept that makes the case of broadening the use of the language more complicated than the initial literature review suggests.

5.3 Wenger's framework as a guide.

Learning is not just a classroom activity, "learning is an integral part of our everyday lives" (Wenger, 1998, p.8). This focuses attention beyond the confines of classroom and educational establishments and asks the question where individuals situate themselves within a CoP. When studying the various Government endeavours that promote the Irish language and when analysing the responses from stakeholders, it became evident that no initiative, regardless of how it is approached or disseminated will be effective unless there is a CoP that share the ideologies and beliefs of the various Government initiatives.

Wenger (1998, p. 9) states that "if we proceed without reflecting on our fundamental assumptions about the nature of learning, we run an increasing risk that our conceptions will have misleading ramifications". I am aware, as a researcher in the organisation in which I work and who is very familiar with the Irish language landscape in education, that I have approached this study with many assumptions. It is difficult not to, when it is my lived experience.

However, Wegner's theory has assisted in making me more aware of those assumptions and look at my findings differently. While my case study is a study of what the case looks like in the moment, taking the CoP perspectives gives me an opportunity to take a fresh look at it from a conceptual standpoint. According to Wenger (1998, p. 8)

> "A key implication of our attempts to organize learning is that we must become reflective with regards to our own discourse of learning and to their effects on the ways we design for learning".

The reflective practice called for here involves "ongoing scrutiny of practice based on identifying the assumptions underlying it" (Lishman, 1991). It is a way of approaching an understanding of one's life and actions, as exemplified by Socrates' notion of reflection as 'the examined life' for ethical and compassionate engagement with the world and its moral dilemmas' (Nussbaum, 1997). Reflective practice is enriched by being able to study practice or thought from various philosophical perspectives.

5.3.1 Perspectives

A theory offers perspectives, ways of looking at a phenomenon, but according to Wenger (1998, p. 9) "a perspective is not a recipe; it does not tell you just what to do. Rather it acts as a guide about what to pay attention to, what difficulties to expect and how to approach problems". Being aware of this allowed me to view my case study from two angles. Firstly, as a practitioner and educator on one hand, and as researcher on the other who has listened, transcribed and analysed the data forwarded by all the participants. Participants had forwarded information to me which indicated what I needed to be paying attention to in preparing for future interventions of Irish language policy in the organisation. A case study captures information at a given place at a given time and the use of Spolsky's Language Policy Framework gave the opportunity to extract relevant information of how best to proceed with a notion of broadening the use of Irish in the community. The findings were descriptive which focused on what to do rather than understanding the rationale behind their assertions.

However, using an alternative theory from which to study the data yielded a richer and more meaningful insight. Rather than focusing on the individuals actions the refocusing brought about by the alternative approach has taken in more thought-provoking ideals.

This is supported by Wenger when he states that

> "if we believed that people in organizations contribute to organizational goals by participating inventively in practices that can never be fully captured by institutionalized processes, then we will minimize prescriptions, suspecting that too much of it discourages the very inventiveness that makes practices effective" (Wenger, 1998, P. 10).

In the educational context, curriculum is not always going to capture people in our organisations. Organisational structures attempt to shape people to fit prescribed curriculum but because every individual has individual needs and who have had different life experiences, it is difficult to meet the requirements of all with one prescription. We minimise and prescribe what we think they should do in our organisational processes. Doing so also discourages inventiveness that makes practice effective. From the CoP perspective, it is not so much about what we should do (in policy formation), it is more about an understanding of us all doing it together as a social learning exercise in a community of practice. Chapter 4 has highlighted the findings from the case study. However, when viewed through an alternative perspective, the study was not as much about the search of what we should do in the form of policy, it was more about what we should, as a community or an organisation, be doing under the umbrella of a Community of Practice.

The recommendations of this research are not therefore fundamentally a policy making process – they are the understandings that the recommendations can be co-constructed in shaping how a community of practice may or may not form. Wenger's social learning theory and Wenger and Lave's (1998) theory of a community of practice are too broad to incorporate in this study. This chapter cannot do justice to Wenger's detailed concept, but the framework permits me to step outside of my own knowledge, experiences, and assumptions and allows me to question my

research anew. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter will focus on four aspects of Wenger's community of practice framework: practice as meaning, participation and reification and the nature of community and locality of practice. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's (2015) value creation framework has also been a valuable perspective that has further illuminated the data.

5.3.2 Practice as meaning

Wenger introduces practice by stating that "practice is about meaning as an experience of everyday life" (Wenger, 1998, p. 52). Wenger believes that the social production of meaning is the relevant level of analysis for talking about practice which he supports with arguments in relation to three steps, negotiation of meaning, participation and reification which form the foundation of the whole theory.

5.3.2.1 Negotiation of meaning

For an individual, the negotiation of meaning is a process that is always being undertaken. In all situations individuals "produce meanings that extend, redirect, dismiss, reinterpret, modify or confirm—in a word, negotiate a new—the histories of meanings of which they are a part" (Wenger, 1998, p. 52). In this way, negotiation is meant to convey both the sense of the word as in "to negotiate a price between two people" but also an action that requires continuous focus and adjustment, as in "negotiating a hiking trail" (Wenger, 1998). In both senses, the negotiation of meaning takes place through an interplay of the internal experience living in the world and external forms we ascribe to the world, or what Wenger (1998) refers to as a duality of meaning (Figure 5.3).

The mechanics of learning are still important process (memory, perception, development of automatism and skills, accumulation and procession of information, structuring of activities and changes in behaviour). However, Wenger argues that they need not be centre stage or become the primary

focus of educational design. This he explains by highlighting the learning of a word. It is much more difficult to memorise a word in a list than it is to learn a word that is being used in a meaningful activity. In relation to Irish this is what is required – the use of the language in a meaningful context which is absent in the community of this case study. Wenger explains when the;

> "meaning of learning are properly attended to, the mechanics take care of themselves. We learn to speak a language so successfully by immersion in part because we are focused on the experience of meaning rather than on the mechanics of learning" (1998, p. 266).

This perspective highlights that when planning for an organisational language policy there needs to be an awareness that meaning must be developed in the student. The process of such a development is "negotiation of meaning".

This links with the work of Spolsky because of the values and beliefs that go hand in hand with actual action. In order to make practice happen Spolsky's Language Policy framework only furnishes the practicalities and the movements of action unlike looking at the findings from Wenger's perspective, where he places focus on meaning, it becomes apparent that interviewees have had to evolve meaning or to be more aware of the negotiation of meaning to make a particular practice happen.
As a group of people undergo the negotiation of meaning together through some endeavour over time, they build a collection of reified constructs and processes for participation as shared practices. In this way, the negotiation of meaning is a fundamental process by which CoPs form. That said, the negotiation of meaning at the group level gives rise to greater social dynamics. It is suggested by Wenger (1998) that the general aim when designing for the negotiation of meaning at the group level is to build appropriate structures for alignment, engagement, and imagination, and doing so requires consideration of not just the balance of participation and reification but also the balance of the designed and the emergent, identification and negotiability. The discussion of these balances is beyond the scope of this study. For modelling a community of practice, it is enough

to know that these balances and priorities provide fundamental operating principals. But it is helpful to consider the impact a CoP has on the negotiation of meaning. Wenger states that together with meaning, the community interacts to promote learning. She notes that CoP are “not intrinsically beneficial or harmful … Yet they are a force to be reckoned with, for better or for worse” (1998, p. 85). Therefore, CoP can be a hindrance or an asset to the learning and broader use of Irish in this project.

According to Wegner there are **two** components involved in this process of practice by meaning – “participation” and “reification”.

5.3.2.2 Participation

Participation “refers to the social experience of living in the world in terms of membership in social communities and active involvement in social enterprises" (p. 55). In the negotiation of meaning, participation takes the common-usage definition: “to have or take a part or share with others (in some activity, enterprise, etc.)” (Merriam-Webster Online, 2009). Participation is an ongoing process. It considers both personal membership in a community and involvement in social endeavours in a way that “combines doing, talking, thinking, feeling and belonging . . . [while involving] our whole person, including our bodies, minds, emotions and social relations” (Wenger, 1998, p. 56). Participation does not denote only harmonious relations and can include conflicting ones as well. Any attempt to speak a language defines an act of participation, ranging from those with a few words (cúpla focal) to those who are competent speakers. Wagner’s model accounts for the range of abilities and of interests.

Legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991) included learning by watching and observing, learning by doing and through developing experience (See Figure 5.2). Other aspects of situated learning that occurred on a daily basis and was described by interviewees included learning through being in the presence of the Irish language speakers and having time to ‘take in’ or ‘soak up’ from other more experienced speakers of

Irish important aspects of the language. Learning through being part of a community and having opportunities to share ideas, engage in conversation, discuss experiences and share resources or participate in a mentoring relationship or learn from more experienced speakers was another common thread alluded to in the interviews.

As well as that, learning through reflection and learning through finding one's own passion were also identified in the interview data. Through participating in a range of these various strategies that supported situated learning, new students, new parents, new teachers and new ancillary staff would be able to join the community on the periphery, and with a culture of using the language more often embedded in the organisation the 'new commers' would take on the responsibility to learn some (more) Irish from those around them. This is a feature of a Vygotskian sociocultural theory of learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Through this process, participants who would be engaging in situated learning would "become part of a community of practice" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 29). Their identity as users of Irish would be shaped and influenced by their practice (Wenger, 1998).

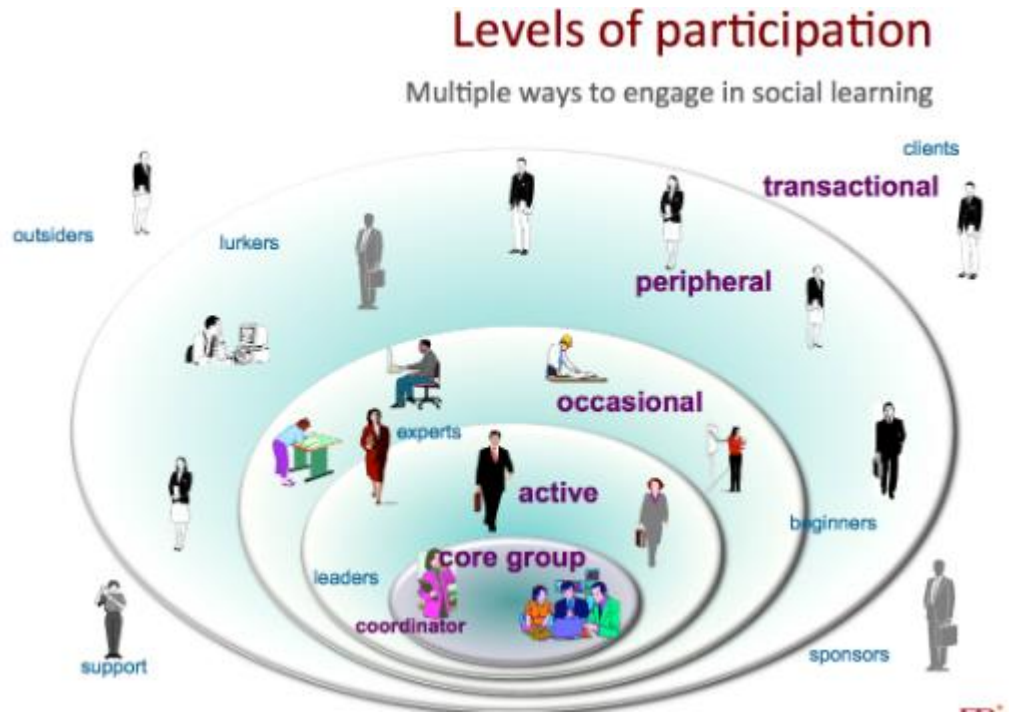
Wenger notes that some participants choose to stay on the periphery of a community, while others tend to take on the identity of the community and move to the core. This interaction between these two sets of community members allows the community to create a richer context for learning. Those on the periphery provide a point of view of what could be lost to more involved participants.

5.3.2.3 Reification.

Every time we talk to someone, do something, go somewhere it changes who we are, and it changes how we connect with things. This connection is reified by making it into a thing, for example speaking Irish, teaching Irish, having a historical perspective of Irish, we reify it because it is important to us, but that thing changes us as well. Reification, in relation to the negation of meaning, is ""the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into 'thingness.' In so doing we create

points of focus around which the negotiation of meaning becomes organized” (Wenger, 1998, p. 58). In this case study, the use of the Irish language is reified to create a focus for the readers and participants so that they may develop implications and principles for moving forward with that idea. Wenger (1998, p. 59) explains that the range of process of reification include “making, designing, representing, naming, encoding, and describing, as well as perceiving, interpreting, using, reusing, decoding and recasting”

Figure 5. 2 Level of participation



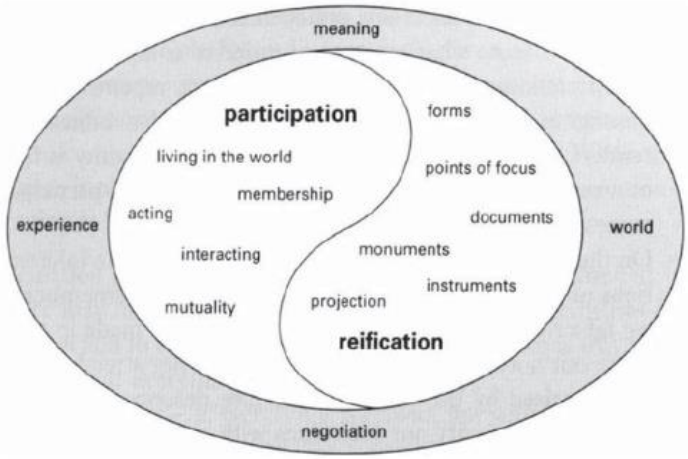
Source: https://wenger-trayner.com/project/levels-of-participation.

To contextualise the meaning of the reified construct it must be complemented with participation. Reification is treating an abstraction as substantially existing. Wenger asserts that both concepts work in unison to provide meaning, thus they are not opposites; they do not substitute for one another, and they are not classificatory categories. Should it happen that one is exposed to too much participation, "then there may not be enough material to anchor the specifications of coordination” (Wenger, 1998, p.65). On the other hand, if an individual is exposed to too much reification "then there

may not be enough overlap in participation to recover a coordinated, relevant, or generative meaning" (p. 65). Participation involves the interaction with others, which is necessary in the proposal of broadening the use of Irish, while reification is a form of participation through an intermediate medium. To assist the stakeholders in finding meaning, a planner must devise a school experience that incorporates just the right blend of participation (social interaction) and reification (the use of information booklets, websites, emails that assist all with learning practical use of the Irish language). The data in this study supplies relevant information to planners to create this right blend of participation and reification.

Reification is just making something a thing. From a conceptual point of view we take a certain understanding or way of being and give it a form. In learning environments, we often take learning and give it a form by writing forms, timetables, curriculums, etc. CoP inevitably create things (stories, tools etc.) which are all products of learning but if there is insufficient shared understanding from different communities of practice and from different perspectives, it makes it more challenging to introduce or implement new practice.

Figure 5.3 The duality of participation and reification



Source: Wenger (1998, p. 63)

Reification shapes our experience. Wenger describes “reification as a very useful concept to describe our engagement with the world as productive of

meaning". The forms, the timetables, the policies, shape how we are but our historical perspectives, and our meaning shapes those forms and tools as well as shaping the reification.

In participation we recognize ourselves in each other, in reification we project ourselves onto the world and not having to recognize ourselves in those projections, we attribute to our meanings.

5.3.3 Identity and its relationship to learning.

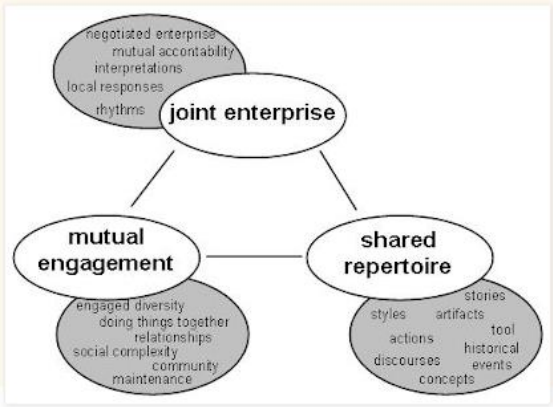
Again, Spolsky's Language Policy model links with the Community of practice framework under the banner of identity. When learning takes place, it transforms "who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming or avoiding becoming a certain person" (Wenger, 1998, p. 215). For a fertile ground for learning there needs to be a close interaction of experience (meaning) and competence (communities) but the two must remain in constant tension. "If they settle down into a state of locked-in congruence, then learning slows down, and practice becomes stale" (p. 214). Wenger recognises that some members choose to stay on the periphery of a community, while others tend to take on the identity of the community and move to the core. Due to the nature of this case study where all participants were not competent speakers of Irish, Wenger's construct of legitimate peripheral participation best describes the interpretation of the findings. While there was support for broadening the use of the Irish language in the school community there was clear evidence that very few visualised their role as being core members of the community with many interviewees claiming they would need help with the Irish language.

5.3.4 Community

Whatever form our participation takes, most of us are familiar with the experience of belonging to a community of practice*" (*Wenger *et al*., 2002, p. 5). Wenger defines a CoP using three dimensions, mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. Findings from this case study have indicated that there is a willingness for all three dimensions. There was

agreement that it would require mutual effort, recognising that practice does not exist in the abstract, but instead exists because "people are engaged in actions whose meanings they negotiate with one another" (Wenger *et al*., 2002, p. 73). While there were reservations from the participants in this study about what the change in linguistic patterns would be like, there were different degrees of support for the initiative with only two people interviewed who were negative about its proposed introduction. Therefore, the participation and reification are "interwoven" through mutual engagement. Wenger describes three dimensions of the relation by which practice is the source of coherence of a community (See Fig 5.4). A Community of Practice is not just an aggregate of people defined by some characteristic, the term is not a synonym for group, team, or network. By association, practice with community for Wenger does not mean that all defined by practice is a community, or that everything anyone body might call practice is the defining property of a clearly specifiable community. The community characteristic of a CoP, as outlined by Wenger (2006, p. 2) requires that its members must “engage in joint activities and discussions” and “share information”. By any individual using the Irish language there is an intension of sharing at some level. This community of practice would have this characteristic on the most basic level. In addition, Wenger specified that community of practice members “[helped] each other” and “[built] relationships that [enabled] them to learn from each other” (Wenger, 2006, p. 2). Once again this was evident in many of the replies I gathered from the participants: membership of a community of practice is therefore a matter of mutual engagement.

Figure 5. 4 Three dimensions of the relation by which practice is the source of coherence of a community



Mutual engagement of participants is necessary as a source of coherence of a community. “Practice does not exist in the abstract” (Wenger *et al*., 2006, p. 73). People engage in actions whose meaning they negotiate with each other. It resides in a community of people and the relations of mutual engagement. It is the mutual engagement that defines the community. Wenger (2002, p. 74) asserts that “whatever it takes to make mutual engagement possible is an essential component of any practice”. In this case study, the third research question in relation to langauge planning gave an indication of what participants believed could be done to promote the Irish language in the school. As a school community, all would be invited to participate and “being included in what matters is a requirement for being engaged in a community’s practice, just as engagement is what defines belonging” (Wenger *et al*., 2002, p. 74). However, what it takes for a community of practice to cohere enough to function can be very subtle and delicate. Indications that while interviewees were supportive there was hesitancy. Students expressed a fear of being mocked if they were to speak Irish outside of the classroom. Teachers expressed frustration at the time another initiative would take. Wenger acknowledges that the kind of coherence that transforms mutual engagement into a community of practice requires work. The work of “community maintenance” is an intrinsic part of any practice. This was recognised by the teachers, by members of management and by ancillary staff as they voiced a strong support for

someone or some group overseeing the project. Mutual engagement needs, especially when engaging in a second langauge, “not only competence but also the competence of others”.

The negotiation of joint enterprise is the second characteristic of practice Wenger asserts as a source of community coherence. What is required is a collective process of negotiation that has been defined by the participants. Fears were shared by participants that this initiative “would be landed on us” without any planning, and this echoes their realisation that such a practice would be futile. It is the participants’ negotiated response to their situation, and by the nature of Wenger’s concept that this feeling belongs to them, despite all the factors being outside of their control. Of importance is that it is not just a stated goal but is created among participants relations of mutual accountability that become an integral part of the practice. Wenger describes this as being as “complex as we are” (p. 78). However, homogeneity does not mean agreement in any simple sense - the enterprise is joint not in that everyone believes the same thing or agrees with everything, but in that it is communally negotiated. It may merely be, in this case, that their response to their condition, similar or dissimilar are interconnected because they are engaged together in the joint enterprise of using the Irish language at a time when they would not have done it before.

Shared repertoire is the third characteristic of practice as a source of community coherence. Over time the joint pursuit of an enterprise creates resources of negotiating meaning. In schools the challenge would be with the student population where each student spends only six years in a school. To embed a culture in a school community that would be transferrable to new members (students, teachers, ancillary staff and parents) remains the challenge. Embedding a repertoire of language actions that the community would adopt in the course of its existence is what will become part of its practice. The repertoire combines both reificative and participative aspects. As a result of this study the school headed note paper is now bilingual which is a sign of reification occurring when a focus was placed on the issue.

5.3.5 Locality of practice

Within the formal formation of a community, there are many self-identified communities of practice. And different perspectives offered by each community of practice adds to why perspectives of Irish are so complex and different. Wenger (1998, p. 122) acknowledges that;

> "calling every imaginable social configuration a community of practice would render the concept meaningless. On the other hand, encumbering the concept with too restrictive a definition would only make it less useful".

However, Wenger further explains that his,

> "… argument is not that physical proximity, institutional affiliation, or frequency of interaction are irrelevant, but rather that the geography of practice cannot be reduced to them. Practice is always located in time and space because it always exists in specific communities and arises out of mutual engagement, which is largely dependent on specific places and times. Yet the relations that constitute practice are primarily defined by learning. As a result, the landscape of practice is an emergent structure in which learning constantly creates localities that reconfigure the geography.' (p.130)

Different ways of looking at the world reveals different sources of continuity and discontinuity. In a school community, individuals would be familiar with each other through different communities of practice, hence there would be a shared history of mutual engagement through other endeavours. These relationships could be student-teacher, student-student, or parent-teacher for example. There would be knowledge and agreement (conscious or subconscious) between different groups. When experiences of participation occur (i.e. people engaging with the Irish language) it would reflect a sense of belonging. Indicators that a community of practice had been formed would include: sustained mutual relationships; shared ways of engaging (effortless use of Irish); specific material (tools, artefacts, local lore, jokes in relation to the use of Irish, jargon and shortcomings in communications as

well as the ease of producing new ones) would be visible and in use through the medium of Irish; an awareness of the use of Irish; and mutually defining identities.

Wenger suggests that the development of a CoP arises out of an informal network that already exists. Various networks exist between the stakeholders in this study but through the medium of English. The data supplied by stakeholders supported the initiative with understandable caution as to how it would be implemented. The domain in this study is reasonably well defined as it is the community of this school where students, parents, teachers and ancillary staff are the main stakeholders. A group of people would adopt an identity, a purpose where they would make more use of the Irish language in their day-to-day social interactions.

Wenger (2006) advocates that a definition of a CoP is the notion that the participants “learn from each other” (p. 2). There were many references in the interviews that this was one aspect of the proposed project that excited and/or challenged them. As this study has the promotion of the Irish language as it is focus, learning is central to both learning the Irish language and learning about how to learn. Scholarship on learning from a sociocultural perspective challenges the notion that sharing resources automatically equates with learning. Many have argued that without evidence that communication goes beyond dissemination of good practice into advancing community knowledge and/or inter analysing information to change behaviour, very little can be claimed about learning (Hargreaves, 1999; Zhang, 2009). When participants in this study were asked how they envisaged using the language and in what context, they forwarded suggestions and visions on how it could be done. They also suggested that there would be a lot of learning when they were given the opportunity to use the language.

5.3.6 Value

Wegner and Trayner (2015) remind us that we are living in a time of great change. Their concern about this is that models of learning have not kept up with this change. In the real-world, learning ‘things’ are two dimensional and

complex. For the purpose of this case study, questions around the concept of value would lead to enquire about the extent the Irish language was valued. Attitudes and beliefs expressed as a result of the second research question gave some insight as to how participants may value the broader use of the Irish language in the school community. While other variables are involved in the ability or unwillingness to cooperate with the project, and how they value the langauge would be one of them.

Figure 5. 5 The value creation framework (Wenger and Trayner, 2015)

Source: https://gpsaknowledge.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Wenger-Trayner.jpg

This model distinguishes between different types of values and models with learning as the dynamic flow between them. In this ‘value creation framework’ learning starts as a joint activity. You meet others who are also on the same trajectory as you (in this case study, those who are willing to communicate in Irish). What is appealing about the framework is that you get value by just participating which Wegner and Trayner coin “immediate value”. From this activity, one may gain confidence with the Irish language

as could be the case in this case study, and participants may gain good insights, good ideas, and new perspectives in what Wegner and Trayner refer to as “Potential Value” because they may or may not end up being helpful. There were many comments that supported the potential value of having the Irish language. The framework acknowledges that putting something into practice (in this scenario - the Irish language) is a creative process and requires a lot of learning and generation of new knowledge and this they refer to as “Applied Value’. As a result of this effort participants should see some improvement in their performance which they call “Realised value”. Of course, the attempt to use Irish may not have worked due to a wide variety of reasons, but this information needs to be brought back to the organisation or the organising group who are promoting the language. This call for “someone being in charge” to guide the members in the organisation seems to be crucial in introducing the initiative and that it will not just organically occur. Learning must go through the different stages of value proposed by Wenger and Trayner and for the proposed learning to take place the feedback loops are essential. Learning must go from seeing the immediate value of the learning to the practice and back again.

How do I argue that this is relevant to this thesis? Participants in this survey relayed the value they placed on Irish when they discussed their attitudes and beliefs about the Irish language. Here it was discovered that Irish was of value only to those seeking employment which require Irish as highlighted by one student who stated;

> “*It is my view if you learn Irish then you are going to become a teacher or something like that like you will be teaching Irish. You are not going to use it otherwise for example my parents learned Irish in school, but they never use it*”. (Student J2: M: A2)

Irish was regarded as an important cultural marker, it was valuable as a cultural marker more so when overseas, working, or on holidays, but it was not seen as a tool for communication or a valuable vehicle of communication as “*you don’t need to use it in your daily life ... because everyone speaks English*” (Student S6: F: B1).

In the absence of those two indicators of value, associated with the Irish language, the only other reason for learning Irish was for fun. It has an entertainment value. *"…. in the school….I think it will survive but there needs to be more talking rather than writing. More chatting and having fun speaking to others in Irish*" (Student: S2: A1). A parent also expressed the importance of fun saying "*for me it would be just kind of craic and fun to go somewhere and start a conversation with an Irish person"* (Parent 3: M: N/A). Teachers also expressed similar sentiments stating,

> *"I think they are happy enough to go out and have the bit of fun saying a few Irish words rather than to be worrying about if I missed out on the wrong tense"* (Teacher 2: F: B1).

An ancillary member of staff also focused on fun saying *"It would be great craic to use more Irish I suppose if we had time and the chance"* (Ancillary Staff: M: A1).

Wenger and Trayner found that the key to the learning factor of the projects they studied was the quality of the conversations amongst stakeholders. Interviewees' knowledge of Irish under the four different linguistic skills revealed that all had a certain level of Irish but that the majority skewed towards the A1 grade (basic linguistic skills). This indicates that the quality of any attempt between them to converse would be basic. However, a finding from this research was that the Irish classroom does not sufficiently prepare students for interaction in social settings. Many respondents believed the Irish classroom and teacher were core to the success of the project. Their expertise of the Irish department personnel and those teachers and students with a good command of Irish must be used in the formation of this initiative. The quality of strategic conversations is an integral part of social learning and according to Wenger and Trayner (2015) is often neglected – this they call 'Strategic Value'. As eluded to earlier, this project into Irish language usage could not occur organically without support, planning and preparing of a policy and this would begin to create an environment where the Irish langauge would be used more in the school community.

There is always the potential here that some stakeholders may improve and enjoy the use of Irish to the extent that they view it differently in school and involve themselves in other Irish projects, both personal and public, in the promotion of the Irish language. This possibility, as a result of learning something new, Wenger and Trayner call ‘Transformative Value’ but it is not essential that it occurs providing the other factors discussed in this chapter are evident.

The Value Creating Framework cycle assists in highlighting where the focus of attention should be in planning a linguistic initiative, as purposed in this case study. The framework can be used to structure the conversations with various stakeholders, set aspirations and decide what conditions need to be in place.

5.4 Conclusion

The rationale for this thesis is that a framework can be suggested that would enable the community in this case study to make more use of the Irish language outside of the Irish language classroom. Spolsky’s Language Policy Theory was a useful framework for the study and it aided in highlighting what knowledge interviewees had of the Irish language, where they use the language, what their attitudes and beliefs were about the langauge and their perceived initiatives and incentives of what would assist in promoting the language in the community. However, when data were analysed it became clear that it would be beneficial if the data were viewed from a different philosophical perspective. On revisiting the literature review it became apparent that the data could be further scrutinised using Social Learning Theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and in particular looking at the data from the Community of Practice perspective. Scrutiny using new headings that focused on participation and reification, on community and on value gave a deeper understanding of the data and further highlighted how to progress. Interpreting the data with those headings gave a better understanding to the researcher as to the complexity involved with such a suggested model of promoting a second language.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The kernel of this single exploratory case study is to investigate the prospects and possibilities of broadening the use of the Irish language in an English-medium post-primary school outside of the Irish classroom in the immediate school environs. The aim is to forward a possible framework for an introduction of a language policy for the organisation being studied. To assist with the investigation, Spolsky's language policy theory (2004) guided the study and allowed for an investigation of three specific areas concerning language: language use, language beliefs and attitudes, and language management. Those areas were, therefore, the core areas of the three research questions and sub-questions which sought to ascertain the feasibility of incorporating a language policy in the school in which the Irish language would be used more widely in the school environment. Being cognizant of the fact that "language and language policy exist in highly complex, interacting, and dynamic contexts that can be explained by major factors in the sociolinguistic situation and attitudes to it … as well as other specific reasons and motivations" (Baldauf and Li, 2008, p. 123), the researcher was aware of the dynamics involved. Real language policy for a community is more likely to be found in its practices than its management and its success will;

> "… depend on its congruity with the language situation, the consensual ideology or language beliefs, the degree to which English has already penetrated the sociolinguistic repertoire and its consistency with a minimal degree of recognition of language rights" (Spolsky, 2004, p. 222).

The importance of suggesting an Irish language policy for an organization comes from the awareness that the Irish language, despite being "the national language and the first official language" (*Bunreacht na hÉireann*,

1937, Article 8, p. 8), is a language that has been classed as endangered (UNESCO, 2009). As a result, it "may soon vanish, ceasing to be used as a vehicle of communication, perhaps even disappearing completely from human history" (Derhemi, 2002, p.151). Since the inception of the State in 1922, Irish has remained a compulsory subject in primary and post-primary schools in Ireland, even though, it is widely acknowledged that English "is the mother tongue of the majority of the population" (Darmody & Daly, 2015, p. vii). While consecutive generations have failed to reproduce a bilingual nation who uses Irish regularly, the education system is still being used in its objective of societal bilingualism (Murtagh van der Slik, 2004). Indeed, the teaching of Irish in the education system (as a second language) has compensated for the failure to naturally transmit Irish outside of *Gaeltacht* areas (Harris, 2008). It is believed that the restoration of the Irish language will be hampered until a practical way the language can be used daily occurs outside of the school (Ó Cathain, 1993). Even then, schools alone are incapable of restoring Irish as the language of the people (Ó Laoire, 2005). However, schools may be the only place students encounter Irish (Parent 1: M: B1).

6.2 Addressing the research questions.

The study, therefore, aimed to:

- Ascertain the language ecology of the school with a specific focus on the role of the Irish language and on the impact, it would have on the proposed policy. Therefore it sought to;
    - Discover the linguistic skills of interviewees
    - How the acquisition of the language reflected on their knowledge
    - How they use Irish in their lives (if at all).
- Ascertain their beliefs and attitudes towards the language to develop an understanding of how these may impact on the proposed project.

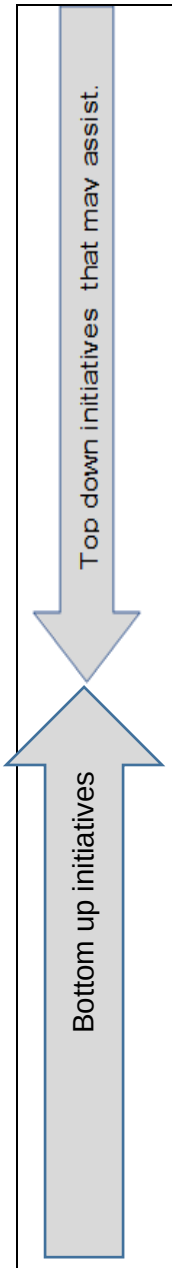
- Develop an understanding of what participants know about, the current Government initiatives (top-down initiatives) and the current school policy (bottom-up initiatives) that promote the Irish language today
- Gain an insight into what Governmental interventions stakeholders believe would assist (from the macro level) with the broadening of the Irish language in the school and what insight can stakeholders give into what grassroots interventions could assist in broadening the use of the language in the school outside of the Irish language the classroom (at the micro-level).

6.2.1 The language ecology

Interviewees self-reported (referring to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages), by selecting the statements that best described their linguistic levels in each of the four areas of aural, oral, reading and writing skills. The researcher then averaged these grades to give an overall grade which indicated the level of Irish the individual reported. This not only indicated to the researcher the linguistic skills interviewees had but it also acted as a focus from which interviewees reflected on their Irish language skills and on the role of Irish in their lives.

The low level of linguistic skills recorded would negatively impact the use of Irish in the school; it could be explained by the absence of opportunity to use the language in the community at present. Despite the low levels (the majority self-reporting a grade A1 and A2 – the two lower grades on the framework) in general, positive approval existed for the proposed intervention from most stakeholders. Reasons for not being able to score higher was attributed to the absence of a communicative focused syllabus in the classroom. In the Irish language classrooms there was, and still is, a focus on reading and writing skills with insufficient emphasis on teaching learners to speak Irish. Adults who were interviewed had lost a lot of the Irish they had learned and were not even aware of the level of Irish they possessed as they are rarely required to use Irish. When these factors were combined it was difficult to envisage how a policy on broadening the Irish language could be attained. Nevertheless, there did exist a willingness to cooperate and a sense that there were possibilities for members of the

community to negotiate meaning and perhaps an environment where a "locally negotiated regime of competence" (Wenger, 1998, p. 137) could occur with planning.



Approaching Language Planning from Top-down initiatives			
Who?	**Do what?**	**How?**	**Why?**
Government Departments	Prioritise	Make the language one of governmental prioritise	Use Irish. Keep the agenda active. Acknowledge Irish as the first language of the state.
	Incentivise	Create incentives like employment opportunities, acknowledgement	Encourage, attract people to use Irish
	Advertise	Major campaigns using all the available media with an emphasis on social media sites	To ensure all citizens are aware of initiatives
	Rejuvenate	Rejuvenate the syllabus where the focus is on communication rather than literature	Focus on communicative approach
Language Policy for the Organisation			
Individual	Commit	To ensure all stakeholders in the organisation are aware of the language policy and afford them the opportunity to use the language when and where they wish to do so.	Each one that commits make the project stronger
Role of the Home	Support	Strong links with home embracing them in all initiatives (guiding and encouraging assistance to use more Irish language in the home). Use of technology (i.e. school website as a means of teaching lessons, webinars, etc.). Set up language classes for parents/guardians. Committee responsible for this home-school nexus.	To create opportunities in the home for students to develop their langauge skills by encouraging more family members to support the student in their Irish language learning
Role of Committee	Drive and encourage	A committee of individuals who are committed to promoting the language in the school.	To embed the suggested practice
Role of other departments in the school	Include	All departments would include how they would assist in the broadening the use of the Irish language	To broaden the use of the Irish
Role of Irish Department	Instruct	Those teaching Irish ensures that students are prepared to use the Irish language by initially setting tasks.	To teach the necessary language needed
Role of Senior Management	Support	Senior management support is viewed as vital in promoting and sustaining a language policy. From insuring there is financial support	To encourage, support and guide the initiative
Whole School Approach	Discuss the value of Irish in the organisation	Revisit the school mission statement and re-evaluate the statement in light of the discussion on language and culture.	To support the promotion of the language.
Approach Language Planning from the bottom-up			

Figure 6. 1 A model designed from the data suggesting an approach for a Language Policy for the organisation.

This verbalisation of commitment was heard from the principal who said all people (teachers, parents and students) who had been educated in Ireland would possess some Irish but have had no reason or opportunity to use it. This was displayed by a parent interviewee who was surprise, he knew more Irish than he thought he knew (Parent 1: M: B1). A member of the ancillary staff (Ancillary 1: M: A2), even though admitting his linguistic skills were low, was supportive and forwarded his visions of how the langauge could be promoted. However, students in focus groups found it difficult to envisage speaking Irish to their friends but, despite being unable to envisage a broader use of the language they could see the benefit of such an intervention.

There were a number, however, who did not want to be involved. The secretary said she would not be speaking Irish on the intercom and a science teacher believed it was not his job to promote the Irish language in the school. There were two complaints about the amount of work teachers have to do with new syllabi and new programmes being introduced each year and they would not welcome further work as a result of the proposed language policy. Consequently, it was suggested that this might not be "a good time" to introduce a new initiative (Teacher 1: M: B1).

Developing an understanding of how they use Irish in their lives highlighted that for the majority Irish did not have an important role. However, one interviewee was an Irish teacher. Another interviewee was a non-native Irish speaking teacher who lived in a *Gaeltacht* region for a year, while another interviewee exhibited a good command and a strong commitment to the language which he ascribed to two factors (Teacher 3: M: B2): his love of languages and his grandmother being a native Irish speaker. When interviewees were asked where they use Irish there were only four areas or situations in which they would use the Irish they have. Firstly, when on holidays or working overseas so they could convey messages to each other without others knowing what they were saying or to indicate they were from a different culture to those of other English-speaking countries. Secondly, it was used as a means to an end, when interviewees needed it for

examinations, or for a particular career path or to gain a qualification. Thirdly, it was used jovially with friends, siblings or peers; for example, one commented it being used in a light-hearted way when one interviewee was drinking "a few pints with [his] brother… then we would try it" (Ancillary 1: M: A2). Finally, Irish was used mostly outside the classroom when doing homework as highlighted by both students and parents. Each of these are examples of negotiation of meaning taking place through the interplay of the internal experience living in the world and external forms ascribed to the world – referred to earlier by Wenger (1998) as a duality of meaning.

There was a slight change in linguistic practice throughout the year of the study (September 2017 – May 2018). Even though it was not the intention to bring about any immediate linguistic changes, some colleagues, who previously spoke only English to the researcher, began to address and speak Irish to the researcher. Moreover, the school principal admitted that as a result of the interview about the proposed language initiative he changed the school headed notepaper, which was in English and is now printed in English and Irish. These changes occurred without any request on the researcher's part and it does indicate that stakeholders in this organisation are willing to incorporate a change in linguistic policy as suggested by this initiative. However, there were reservations.

There was a stronger commitment from adults interviewed than from the student focus groups. Most of the teachers, parents, the ancillary staff member and the school principal interviewed said they could see the benefits of such an intervention, not only for the student population but also, they saw the initiative as a vehicle for improving their own level of Irish and it would give them a reason to use it if they wished.

However, teenagers found it difficult to envisage a scenario in which they would be speaking Irish to their friends in the school environment. A change in this mentality would have to be orchestrated in the Irish language classroom, where students would practice role-plays of different scenarios which would enable them to use Irish in the community if they so wished. What became evident in this research is that little emphasis is placed on

communication skills inside the classroom and this entails that students do not possess the attitude, motivation or confidence that would enable them to start conversations in Irish freely outside of the classroom (see Yashima, 2002). Motivation is a key part of the process of learning a second or foreign language (Matsuoka and Evans, 2005, p. 3). In a situation, outside of the classroom in particular, where the language learners are exposed to the L2, motivation and proficiency are not sufficiently present for them to start communication. Variables such as attitude towards the language and confidence of stakeholders to use their newly acquired language outside the classroom are important components in the notion of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) (Yashima, 2002; MacIntyre *et al.*, 1998). This proposed initiative would assist in creating a rationale to use Irish. WTC is useful in investigating why the standard of Irish communicative competence is not perceived to be good. Data from this study strongly suggest that Irish language classroom can be the focus in preparing students to communicate. Changes in school policy regarding the Irish langauge should also be used to encourage students to use the language if they so wish.

6.2.2 Language attitudes and beliefs

Spolsky's second tenet for investigation is that of language attitudes and beliefs that are important insofar as they describe "what is the value of a given language and how should that language be used" (Armstrong, 2011, p. 152) or "what people believe should be done with language" (Spolsky, 2004, p. 14). Wenger - Trayner (2015) also discuss in their ‘value creation framework’ that learning starts as a joint activity. The “immediate value” sensed by individuals who interact with them who are on the same trajectory. The confidence gained from such an interaction could lead to individuals gaining new perspectives of the language (“potential value” as referred to earlier by Wenger – Trayner, 2015), particularly if the interaction was positive and or enjoyable. You meet others who are also on the same trajectory as you (in this case study, those who are willing to communicate in Irish). What is appealing about the framework is that you get value by just participating which Wegner and Trayner coin “immediate value”. An individual could gain confidence with the Irish language from this activity and participants may

gain good insights, good ideas, and new perspectives in what Wegner and Trayner refer to as the “Potential Value” of the Irish language. There were many comments which supported the potential value of having the Irish language. Putting what they have learned into practice, is both a creative practice and it is an opportunity for learners to give “applied value” to the language.

In this study, interviewees believed the main rationale for a language is for communication. The Irish language, however, was for them more a marker of identity. Nevertheless, there was a belief that one did not necessarily have to be able to speak it to have a sense of being an Irish citizen. The ideology of *an cúpla focal* (a few words) was enough to indicate that you were Irish. This is supported by the latest census findings where 39.8% of the population reported that they were capable of speaking Irish (1,761,420 people). However, only 1.7% (73,803) said that they did so daily outside the education system (CSO, 2017). Other Irish identity markers, such as music and Gaelic football were mentioned but it was stated that one does not have to be able to play an instrument or play a Gaelic sport to identify with those symbols of Irishness (Parent 2: M: A1). Likewise, it is unnecessary to speak Irish to have a sense of being an Irish citizen. There was an appreciation of those who were able to speak another language, adolescents using the word "cool" to describe their peers who speak another language in their homes. A similar sentiment was expressed by adults when they hear other languages being spoken by immigrant families (Teacher 4: F: A1; Parent 4: F: B1) or when they hear the Irish teachers speaking Irish in the school. Yet, there was an insufficient need for adults to learn anymore Irish than they had at present while students found it only necessary to speak the required amount that would enable them to pass the oral Irish examination.

Interviewees' beliefs about the Irish language varied but there was an agreement that it is of no advantage to speak Irish unless you want a specific job that requires Irish. What was prevalent was that the language was viewed as an artefact, comparable to the monastic round towers or ancient dolmens which we have inherited from previous generations (Doyle,

2014). So, while Irish is still viewed by Irish people as a strong marker of Irish identity it nevertheless does not require one to be a fluent speaker. Acknowledging that this view exists, it assists with the formation of a language policy insofar as the approach taken must include a rationale for learning the language. Learning Irish merely for communication purposes is no longer necessary so there could more of a focus on the historical significance of learning Irish.

6.2.3 Language management

Regarding the third research question, interviewees answered questions regarding their knowledge of Governmental initiatives. They forwarded proposals, suggestions and ideas on how both the Government (top down initiatives) and the school (bottom up initiatives) could promote the Irish language in schools (See Figure 6.1).

Concerning language planning in the Republic of Ireland, there has been a continued dominance of macro-level or top-down approaches by Government and inter-governmental institutions (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2010; Ó Flatharta, 2015) usually taking the form of “quasi-hard policy instruments” (Nic Giolla Mhichil *et al*., 2018, p. 869) i.e. policies enacted but not fully implemented to any great satisfaction. Other policies exist as discussed earlier but what was evident in this study is that stakeholders in this community were not aware of many of the Governmental initiatives designed to promote the Irish language. No one was aware, for example, of the requirements by schools, under the Education Act 1998, to promote the Irish language and culture. What was worthy of note was that where certain initiatives received media attention and when the item had relevance to their lives, they were able to relate some information about the initiative. Irish language initiatives that were advertised well in the national media had been heard about but with very few details on how the initiatives worked. There were initiatives where "we the people have not heard about it" (Parent 4: F: A1), meaning that those often at grassroots level do not feel they are part of any Irish language plan because they do not use Irish as a daily communicative language. Perhaps, schools should also be employed with

the task of promoting the different initiatives. Perhaps, initiatives should be designed to be attractive to all Irish citizens.

From the macro level interviewees' replies could be grouped into four headings where they thought Government interventions must be more proactive in prioritising, incentivising, advertising and rejuvenating the language (See Figure 6.1). Nevertheless one interviewee did believe the Government can only design an initiative and that it is the people who must act upon it. Nevertheless, stakeholders had not heard about a lot of the initiatives but there was a sense of apathy about them as if it had little to do with their lives. Adults were surprised that almost ten years of the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language* had passed and they not heard about it. This highlights the possibility that campaigns may help to increase awareness such as using famous sports and media stars in the promotion. It is interesting to note that "the objective of Government policy in relation to Irish is to increase on an incremental basis the use and knowledge of Irish as a community language" (Government of Ireland, 2010, p. 3) is one of the aims of the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language* but knowledge of the initiative is not reaching this community. If schools are the driving force of the Irish language, it is evident that these language promotion issues are not being highlighted to the level that stakeholders in the organisation would "at least have heard about the [initiatives]" (Parent 3: M: N/G). There needs to be a review of how such an initiative can be made more relevant to the population.

Many interviewees called on Government to change the Irish syllabus and place a focus on the communicative approach which would ensure more use of the language outside of the Irish classroom. A study of the Irish language syllabus prior to 2018 indicates that there should be a focus on the oral component it is evident that this is not happening in Irish classrooms. As the only formal oral Irish examination takes place at the end of their six years study the focus is not on speaking Irish until the final year of studies. It was apparent, in this study, that students or their Irish language teachers appear to focus on this oral Irish skill until their final year of post-primary school. The

new Junior Certificate Specifications for Irish commenced with first year students in September 2018, coinciding with the commencement of this project. Among the aims and objectives they state;

> "…[Irish as a] language is a window whereby students can look both at their historical and contemporary culture and identity, and therefore gain an appreciation of the importance of assuming personal ownership of the language. By studying Irish, students are given the opportunity to identify with the language community and participate in it to best take advantage of communication opportunities. By thinking about and studying Irish and elements of the Irish culture, students' awareness of the culture of the language grows" (DES, 2017, p.5)

However, no mention was made of this new focus by any interviewee or in any school documentation and my awareness as an Irish teacher is that teachers had received no formal training regarding the new changes in this new approach. Perhaps the impact of the new intervention and departmental specifications had not yet impacted to any extent on this school community.

The lack of awareness of Government commitment to the Irish langauge was clear as some interviewees urged the Government to prioritise the Irish 'language while other interviewees believed there were more social issues to be prioritised before the Irish language. Some replies believed that Ireland's crisis with housing and health should be Governmental priority. Also, it was acknowledged that to promote Irish would be costly but the cost of maintaining the Irish language was questioned especially when people heard of the different initiatives for the first time at the interview for this study.

From the grass-roots up perspective (the macro level) there was a realisation that for such an initiative to be successful an individual must be supportive, committed and must be willing to drive and encourage the initiative when and where possible. For groups within the organisation there were calls that they should include the language in their work to some extent, that school management must be supportive and that the Irish

department must prepare the students to use the language outside the classroom (See Figure 6.1).

In this school, there was apparently no internal initiative to promote the Irish language outside of the classroom and not much emphasis was placed on the external initiative *Seachtain na Gaeilge*. However, from interview data, it became evident that the approach to implementing should stem from several areas within the school community and, with careful planning, it was envisaged that more Irish could be used in the environment. Data collated could be divided into different themes of approach. Like with all school initiatives the school must look to its school mission statement to see if the proposed intervention is of value to this community. A study of the mission statement of the school participating in this research makes no reference to Irish language or culture. This is where it is suggested to begin with a discussion among all stakeholders to incorporate some aspect of language or culture into the mission statement. During the interviews and observational periods of the study, it was stated on numerous occasions that Irish would have been used if it occurred to them to do so. They "never sit down and discuss it" was the explanation of one contributor (Teacher 3: M: B2)

The individual is important in this project insofar as an individual must feel competent and confident to use Irish and must believe in the endeavour. This bottom-up approach believes that the individual must be willing, and encouraged, to do what they can in order to create an environment where the Irish language is heard and seen more. Over time it would become the norm for Irish to be used in comments, in posters or conversations, it would become customary after a while.

Regarding groups, they could create opportunities to use Irish by forming language circles, like were held in the staffroom several years ago and discussed earlier. Suggestions to create Irish clubs, *Pop-up Gaeltachtaí* or to create scenarios where the Students' Council and the Parents' Council could become involved in promoting the language in the school community could strengthen the initiative. Even though, interviewees believed the senior

management team must be the driving force behind every successful project there was some reservation with this project. While staff and parents interviewed believed the school management team should be supportive and drive this project, the principal believed that he would prefer a decree from the DES and that he would be passing everything on to the Irish department, which he viewed as the driving force behind the suggested project. Most respondents did believe a committee should be formed with interested people from different departments and different student strands could be on board. Moreover, the principal disagreed saying he would favour an Irish department led initiative. While there was support from all quarters for the proposed initiative, it was important to note that when attempts were made to pinpoint a person or group to bring forth the project, there was a lot of hesitancy to commit to the project. Respondents indicated that it would not be within their remit to be involved due to their lack of confidence in their language skills and due to the lack of time they had as a result of changing working practices caused by the new Junior Certificate reform. Some replies were advocates of having a person in charge who was either employed to promote the language, or to select a member of staff who would have a post of responsibility and make them responsible for the project. However, analysis of staff minute notes from May 2018, where the schedules of posts were discussed, the promotion of the Irish language was not mentioned at all. Another suggestion was to employ people who were supportive of the Irish language and that over time the teaching staff would comprise of people who were either Irish speakers or supporters of such an endeavour.

What was clear from the responses was that the Irish teacher in the classroom had to focus on oral language skills that would enable students to communicate in Irish in different scenarios in the school environment. Interviewees from this organisation felt that they had not been taught to speak Irish in a functional natural setting and it is suggested that if the focus of the Irish classroom was on oral Irish language skills that it would eliminate some of the anxiety experienced by many when attempting to use Irish.

The advantages of the proposed project can be grouped under three headings: The most prevalent advantage was that stakeholders would be able to practice oral Irish skills which they cannot do in the community. Secondly, this, in turn, could alleviate language anxiety experienced by many using a second language. And finally, the gentle approach advocated by respondents mimics the natural approach to language learning which is not forced on any participant. It was envisaged that over time it would/could become the norm to use more Irish, it would become a habit to use some Irish in the environment in certain circumstances.

However, there were concerns about the obstacles that existed to broaden the use of the Irish language in the school. First, everyone in the school speaks English as their first language and to speak any other language for communication purposes was viewed as an obvious obstacle. Therefore, Irish is not required to convey any messages. This leaves a lack of opportunity to use any language they have learned. There is no need to use Irish as a nationalistic symbol unless they are abroad on holidays or working. Since the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922 Irish was seen as something pivotal to the success of the state and served as a symbol for Ireland's struggle for independence, without becoming an integral part of society (Cormack, 2000, p. 396). This dichotomy between perception and practice remains an obstacle to any intervention.

Irish was viewed by many in this study as a difficult subject. They thought the grammar and sentence structure in Irish was complicated and complex. This attitude is also an obstacle to the progression of this project. Aligned with this there was dissatisfaction with the Irish syllabus which created a negative attitude towards the language.

For such a project to be implemented, it was believed that it would be costly and time-consuming, both of which interviewees thought were obstacles to promoting the language. Parents alluded to the fact that students may be too immature to realise the value of such an opportunity and teenagers themselves admitted that they would be embarrassed and bashful using Irish in case others listening would be better than them and some students could

not envisage themselves speaking Irish to their peers. Teachers were concerned with the time it would take to implement such a project and believed that it would be costly if done right.

6.3 Implications for policy.

At present, there is no evidence of the Irish language being prioritised in the school environment outside of the Irish classroom. The language used in the visual landscape (noticeboards) and aural landscape (intercom, speech used in the community) is English. The single exploratory case study gave an insight into what perceptions stakeholders in an English-medium post-primary school had of the Irish language. As interviewees relayed their knowledge, attitudes, and belief about Irish they offered a framework that could be used in the promotion of the Irish language in school. The core of the conceptual framework is the individual who must decide whether to use Irish and, where and when to do so. A core of linguistic policy, therefore, is nudging the individual to participate in using the Irish language.

In any attempt of language revitalisation language transmission in the home is of crucial importance and this is reiterated throughout the literature on language revitalisation (King ,2001; Ó Laoire, 2006; Reedy, 2000; Romaine, 2007; Spolsky, 1995). Reedy *et al*, (2011, p.19) claims that in order for a language to be sustainable it "requires the merging of the current educational focus with a focus on growing the language in homes". Therefore creating a link with the home in order to encourage the use of Irish in the home is a necessary move. Lee & Finger (2010, p.83), highlight the importance of the prominence given to the home describing it as an '… untapped potential of the home for delivering improvement in student learning and for adding substantially to the resource base of your learning organisation". They call for "a situational analysis of your current school context and … it is important to make integral to that analysis the affordance available for learning in the home" (Lee & Finger, p. vii). Often, classroom instruction "is supplemented by personal tutoring, either at the kitchen table, in the library, in a retail centre, on the web or at the school" (Lee & Finger, p. vii). What is required is support for intervention where parents/guardians

would value opportunities “for ‘teachable moments’” where the Irish language would be used “any time, any place, anywhere, anyhow” (Lee & Finger, 2010, p. 153). The nudge theory approach, as discussed in literature review, would be of value. Asking parents to consider a home policy on the use of Irish with support from the school is one option. An important element in forging and shaping the home-school nexus is communication and especially the development of an information paradigm approach to integrating information, technology and learning within a networked school community (Lee & Finger, 2010, p. 14). However, considerable more needs to be done than simply increasing student access to technological devices and a “greater understanding of the nexus between school and home access and use of technologies by students is needed” (McInerney, 2014, p.3). This indicates that the home-school nexus in relation to this research is a study in itself and the brief discussion on this aspect does not do justice to the complexities involved. Indeed, it is a study that could be undertaken at a future date that could further assist with the aims of broadening the use of Irish in the organisation. Data supplied that would assist with such project focused on areas of support with the Parents Council being selected as a promoter of the concept and the Irish language teachers a core team being the instigators and guiders in the suggested policy.

As an organisation, there should be a discussion on how the language and/or culture is perceived, with a specific focus on the wording of the school's vision statement and mission statement. It was believed that senior management should be the driving force around this project and that a special Irish language committee is formed with organisational stakeholders from different disciplines and different strata within the organisation represented. The Irish Language department should also be included in the policy planning as it is evident that students at present are not being taught how to communicate with others and opportunities created in the school for students to practice their linguistic skills. The problem facing the school is that at present there is no place where one can use Irish outside of the classroom. This could be addressed by various groups and committees and suggestions forward was to set up Irish language clubs, conversation

circles, *Pop-up Gaeltachtaí* which "would give students something to do at lunchtime" (Teacher 4: F: A1). The framework also includes incorporating pre-existing groups in the school and suggests broadening their role to include the promotion of the Irish language. The home was also a site where language could be promoted more and with the help of the school, it was suggested that more Irish could be used in the home that there is at present. While the framework shows that at present there is very little Irish being used in the environment there did exist a belief that more could be done but someone to be in charge. Despite this positive proposal no one could commit to such a project believing "you would need to be an Irish teacher" (Parent 4: F: A1). However, several respondents said they would be willing to be on a committee. The findings in the research suggest that in the event of language policy about the Irish language being introduced there would be a commitment but, perhaps not at present, as a result of the workload teachers believe themselves to be under. As teachers and ancillary staff would be the ones forwarding this project daily in the school their heavy workload at present must be considered as an obstacle in any plans to implement language policy.

6.4 Implications for practice.

The current data from this study suggests that it is possible to implement a policy on broader use of the Irish language beginning with a debate on how the school community values Irish language and culture. A policy must be introduced in a planned and organised manner that would ensure no one feels under any pressure to participate. Most interviewees believe that guidance must come from senior management but in this organisation, it is clear that the task of broadening the Irish language use would be delegated to a committee and/or the Irish department. The language skills of the community are low, as self-reported before interviews, so, any approach must be planned and organised. Interviewee data highlighted the importance of the Irish classroom who must teach the necessary language to use in different situations in the school community and set tasks for students that would enable them to use more Irish in their surroundings (surveys, questionnaires, and conversations). Findings from the study raised

awareness of the school environment which could act as a canvas for the language taught in the classroom. From the photographic analysis, it became evident that many opportunities were missed in classrooms and halls, corridors and passageways to use the Irish language that would scaffold the work done in the Irish classroom. As a result, this investigation has shown how the school environment is not used to its maximum potential for promoting the language.

The core of the study is the individual who should be encouraged and nudged to use Irish. Moreover, groups within the organisation "need to provide greater opportunities for spontaneous communication and immersion settings need a greater focus on form or a more analytic approach to language learning" (Ó Duibhir and Cummins, 2012, p. 47). We must "increase opportunities for the productive use of the target language in meaningful contexts" (Swain, 1996, p. 97). This could be done by creating language clubs, language circles, tasks where Irish could be used. The Irish classroom again becomes the hub where the focus should be on intrinsically motivating the learner. Enjoyable and engaging lessons with a focus on a communicative approach and the creation of enjoyable and engaging language lessons, based on the communicative needs of the students, - lessons that would stimulate their interest and take cognisance of their different abilities as learners.

The findings also illustrated that while there was support for the proposed initiative there were concerns that it would not be planned carefully, it should begin at least a year before its implementation. Broadening the use of the language in the school would lessen the "growing disjunction between the energies invested in learning the language in the classroom and the opportunities for using it meaningfully outside the classroom" (Ó Laoire, 2015, p. 103) and students perceptions of learning Irish may change when there is an opportunity to use it.

The whole school community must be reflective of how they would use the language and in the present climate of changing syllabi and curricula, the changes must not create an extra workload on any stakeholder. Creativity

and innovation are required. Being mindful of using the language when and where feasible is what is being sought alongside a Willingness To Communicate (WTC). This calls for a strong internal campaign highlighting the rationale for such an intervention and highlighting the benefits in such an endeavour. Despite the exploratory nature of this study, there was an insight into what this community could envisage happening concerning the broader use of the Irish language. A point of interest was the focus stakeholders placed on the importance of having fun when using and learning the language. This reveals the notion that Irish is no longer a language we need for communication and as Irish people, we should have "a smidgen" (Teacher 2: M: A2), enough to separate Irish people from other English-speaking countries, it being only one of the markers of Irish identity. However, some do not believe it is relevant and that the time and money should be spent on learning a foreign language that they could use in work or when traveling. Nevertheless, even those who were opposed to the proposed intervention could see the advantages of such a project.

6.5 Recommendations for policy

While findings from this research describe the current linguistic situation in the school and the perceived trajectories of a language policy which would broaden the use of the Irish language, further research should investigate the impact of the proposed framework in practice. An action research project would enable researchers to view how the suggested framework works in practice

Since this is an exploratory case study in a mixed English-medium post-primary school in a rural area in the west of Ireland it has many limitations. It is the first study to take one school and to investigate the knowledge of, attitudes towards, and opinions about, the Irish language, and in particular, the possibilities are investigated of developing a language policy depending on the answers of various stakeholders in a school community. However, it has provided a framework from which the school policymakers could draw upon. The next step would be to plan for and introduce a language policy beginning cognisant of the findings of this report, with a whole school

discussion on the value the school community has on the Irish language and Irish culture. In line with Government initiatives and that the language acts as a marker of national identity a suggested policy would focus on promoting the language from within the classroom with a focus on a communicative approach to teaching and learning. Students should be encouraged (or 'nudged') to use the language in the school environments in the various groups mentioned or with other personnel in the school. People who would be willing to speak Irish would be recognisable by wearing a Fáinne Úr (an Irish ring) in their labels. There would be opportunities available to practice Irish using an Irish language 'buddy system', pop-up Gaeltachtaí, Irish clubs etc. A policy of bilingualism should be encouraged when using the school website, school Facebook and Twitter accounts and the Irish Language should be more visible around the school. The Irish language could feature a lot more in school publications.

6.6 Limitations of the study

Despite providing valuable information about stakeholders' knowledge of, attitudes towards and perceptions of interventions for the Irish language in the school environment, the limitations of the study should be acknowledged. The study was confined to one mixed English-speaking post-primary school in a farming hinterland in the west of Ireland and thus the applicability of the findings to other schools in different socio-economic strands is limited. The literature review has supported awareness of other perspectives in different areas though.

As with any research, the possibility of researcher bias was a concern, and this was considered when planning the study. Following the guidelines of IPA, it promotes the practice of bracketing where researchers reflect and state their positionality and any biases that they may have. Another concern was that of the senior position, head of the Irish department and a teacher in the school for 22 years the researcher had to be aware of social desirability response set, where interviewees reply with answers they anticipate will be favoured by the interviewer (Wilson, 1996).

Despite the limitations of the study, it was a qualitative study of considerable size. It used rigorous methodological approaches and produced rich data, highlighting issues that have important implications for the promotion of the Irish language in English-medium post-primary schools.

The fact that interviewees did not have to enact any part of the proposed policy on broadening the use of Irish is also a limitation as students found it difficult to envisage using the language with their friends and adults who had completed their Irish language education had to reflect on when they last used Irish. A recommendation would be to focus on the Irish Language Classroom and assign tasks to pupils (and to other stakeholders) to use a certain amount of Irish in a certain place in order to get stakeholders using more Irish in the environment.

Therefore, only their attitudes, beliefs and impressions of what could happen rather than what had happened or what they experienced as a result of an intervention. Yet, it was important to ascertain their perceptions before any policy implementation which the research would hope to be the next step following on from this project.

Another limitation is that not all strata in the school population are accounted for. There is an awareness that the pupils interviewed in focus groups were class representatives who were members of the student council. However, there were no members of the traveller community amongst the interviewees. Efforts were made to select a parent from the traveling community, but they were not willing to be interviewed believing they did not think they had anything to offer. Despite the careful explanation that it was only their feeling for, and experiences with, the language that was required they still were not willing to partake in the study. Other parents refused to be interviewed as they believed they had nothing to say about the title of the study.

The researcher's position as a teacher in the school may have had an adverse effect on the data collection. All efforts were made to alleviate this throughout the interviewing period. Adults forwarded much more data than

the student cohort did and again there was a question of the researcher's positionality as an Irish teacher in the school and a fear that the students were being shy or cautious in the presence of their teacher. The researcher was concerned about this until he was asked to supervise a group of students who were being interviewed by an external researcher on the topic of the difficulties facing young people in rural Ireland. The students were no more responsive here than they were in the focus group interviews in this study. It gave an insight perhaps of how our young people are not being educated to express their feelings confidently or that they feel they lack authority or ownership to make any change.

6.7 Contribution to knowledge

This study was an exploratory case study on a single school where knowledge of the Irish language, attitudes towards Irish and perceptions of what could be done to broaden the use of the language in the school environment was studied. No previous study has taken such a micro view of the Irish language situation. The suggested framework provides the school being studied with a guide for future practice concerning the promotion of the Irish language in the school. Other schools could also attempt to do so. At present schools around the country work towards gaining a *Gaelbhratach* (Irish flag) for their school but there has been no framework to present to participants as they set out on what appears to be a trial and error methodology. This in-depth study of one organisation and the accompanying blueprint could be adapted to other English-medium schools leaving scope for other factors to be added or deleted. This could begin with a discussion among all stakeholders in a school of the role Irish language and/or culture has in their lives and how issues of Irish language and culture can be satisfactorily addressed.

Of interest is the core of the findings that were centred on two aspects. Firstly, the individual and how they perceive and act towards the language is fundamental to the success of the project. It is a challenge to nudge, entice, and encourage a person to broaden their use of the language. Secondly, as an organisation, the school community must discuss how it views the Irish

language and/or culture and re-evaluate their school vision statement and/or mission statement considering these findings.

This study also highlighted how the school environment could be used to scaffold the work in the classroom. The Irish language must find its way into the visual and aural landscape of the school with the aid of committed and supported members of staff and students.

This community values the Irish language and supports the initiative but only on a superficial level: superficial insofar as it is not viewed as a communicative language and when used it is only a very basic level of Irish while on holidays or working overseas or when having fun with friends when they use the *cúpla focal*. Otherwise, it is learned for extrinsic motivational factors such as gaining qualifications for certain careers. Those who have acquired a good level of Irish express frustration at not having a place to use the Irish language.

Even though the focus of the study was the use of the Irish language outside the classroom in the immediate school environment findings from the data placed an emphasis on what was happening in the Irish language classrooms. For this initiative to be a success, students must be taught how to communicate with each other and to simulate scenarios where such encounters could occur.

6.8 Conclusion

Prospects and possibilities of broadening the use of the Irish language in an English-medium post-primary school was the focus of this study. Using Spolsky's language policy theoretical framework to investigate the knowledge of, attitude towards and perceptions of broadening the language in the school, data was analysed, and this aided in developing a comprehensive view of if and how the language could be promoted. However, Wegner's concept of community of practice further enlightened how the suggested initiative could be implemented with focus on participation and value. At present, the Irish language is a compulsory subject for most students in Irish state schools but there rarely exists an

opportunity for them to use the language they learn in any meaningful context outside the classroom. What was apparent in this research was that there was recognition that the initiative requires regular joint activity. In this way a community of practice develops ways of doing things, ways of seeing and valuing the Irish language and a different way of thinking about the language as it used by more people in the organisation.

The language skills were low amongst the interviewees who placed the blame on the lack of opportunity to communicate in Irish and to the lack of emphasis on the communicative language in the Irish classroom. However, there was support for such an initiative only if it was a choice and that people did not have to speak Irish if they did not wish to. There was great emphasis on having fun when speaking and learning Irish. While there was recognition of the fact that Irish was no longer needed anywhere for communication within or outside of this community it was not necessary to learn it. However, there was a belief that we should not lose the language as it gave Irish people an identity and using a few words of Irish was enough to expresses that Irish identity. This was done more abroad when on holidays or working. Nevertheless, it was not a necessary component of being Irish, but it was felt that it would be nice to have some Irish. One interviewee sums up the attitude towards the language when she stated that "it would be a shame, but not a disaster" (Parent 4: F: B1) if the Irish language was to die out. Yet, all stakeholders interviewed believed that there should be some of compulsory Irish in the education system, but different models of delivery suggested.

To promote the language required each individual being aware of the aims and objectives of the proposed policy for them to be aware of their role in the initiative or at least making them aware so that they can make an informed choice about whether they wish to contribute to the initiative or not. It was evident that most interviewees in this school community had not heard of the various Irish language initiatives designed to promote the Irish language in the community. There was evidence of the top-down Governmental initiatives not reaching grass-roots level on many occasions and of those

who had been heard about; it was only when those initiatives made the headlines.

Suggestions to promote the Irish language were many and when analysed it was evident how stakeholders in this organisation sensed such an initiative would work. Firstly, the power of everyone was recognised as being key to the success of the initiative. Each member of the school community must be made aware of the proposed initiative and have an opportunity to reply as to how they could (or could not) be of assistance in such a policy. Having collated this information, the school stakeholders must re-evaluate their school vision and mission statement to reflect if the issues of culture or language have been included. From this mission statement and from all individuals being aware of the initiative a new mission statement could be presented to all stakeholders. Support, assistance, and leadership from senior management were viewed as being a key element of the work where they were seen to be the driving force behind the project. Most also spoke about having one person in charge, either from within the staff or from outside the organisation who would be employed to embed a culture of using more Irish in the school. A special committee with the responsibility of promoting the language in the school was cited as being important, as was the assistance of the already formed committees of the student council and the parents' council. The Irish language department, being the experts in the school in the Irish language were believed to be key to the success and a driving force insofar as they must teach students how to communicate in Irish – a skill most interviewees said they could not do. The home was also cited as an important aspect in the initiative and that the home is kept aware of the focus on the Irish language. Suggestions made were that modern technology could be used to communicate more efficiently with the home with "words of the week" or "sentences of the week" for the homes to practice. The school environment is underutilised as space where Irish language used in the classroom could be more visual in the school environment. The researcher, being an Irish language teacher, saw the opportunities missed in the environment to promote and to endorse the language learned in the classroom.

While there were some apathy and indifference towards the project there also was an acceptance that there should be more opportunity to use the Irish language and even if it was for extrinsic motivational factors it was worth a try.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical Approval Form

EA2

UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN

Ethical Approval **Please word-process this**

This form must be completed for each piece of research activity conducted by academics, graduate students and undergraduates. The completed form must be approved by the CERD Research Ethics Committee.

Please complete all sections. If a section is not applicable, write N/A.

1 Name of researcher	Mark Flynn Department/School: School of Education
2 Position in the University	EdD Candidate
3 Role in relation to this research	Primary investigator
4 Brief statement of your main research question	**Title of Research:** Exploring prospects for revitalising the Irish language in an English-medium Post-primary school – a case study. **Research Questions:** ○ What are, and have been, stakeholders' experiences of the usages of the Irish language in the school, its community and their everyday lives outside of school? ○ How have their experiences of the Irish language shaped stakeholders' perceptions of their Irish identity and ideology? ○ What key factors do stakeholders consider could encourage or inhibit establishing a whole school language policy for revitalising the Irish language: *a) Macro (by the state)* (i) Language policy (ii) Language planning *b) Micro (by the school)* (i) Stakeholders' socialisation (ii) Preparations and planning (iii) Processes of implementation (iv) Potential impacts

English medium schools are most schools in the Irish state. The Irish language revival movement and government policies, which have focused on the education system as a means of promoting the language, recognises the strong impact *schools* can have. However, they also acknowledge the failure of English-medium schools to promote a broader use of the Irish language. This apparent failure means the students and staff do not have an educational community in which to use the Irish language they have learned in classroom formal lessons. The purpose of this project is to explore the possibility of enabling a broader use of the Irish language in a case-study school in which English is the medium of instruction. It will assess the prospects and possibilities to which the use of the language can be extended and in day-to-day activities in the school community. Such a revitalising process is termed 'normalisation' though the term is open to interpretation. Using the term to normalise the language in school live is fraught with Interpretation.

> Linguists use the word 'normalisation' to indicate the extent to which a language can be part of everyday experience, making the use of a particular language 'normal' (Grin 2003). This can be interpreted as both promoting language use and aiding its recuperation in all sectors and activities of society as significantly happened with the Welsh language during the twentieth century (Jones, 2006). To achieve such normalisation, Grin's (2003) study of the Catalan language highlighted the striking convergent conditions for the long-term vitality of a language namely capacity (the establishment of the demo-linguistic base), opportunity (establishing a context of language rights and freedoms regarding the possibilities to use the language) and desire (an increased awareness of the population of the social relevance of the language being

protected and promoted). The term normalisation can be used to encapsulate these three conditions, and these are reflected in the research questions of this study.

The use of a comprehensive literature review will extend the knowledge on how minority languages are promoted in schools and communities globally. Focus will be on minority languages such as Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, Basque, Catalan and Maori. Further research papers on language ideology, identity, planning and policy will inform the research regarding language promotion. Internal school documentation (staff meeting notes, school brochures/magazines/ school newsletters) will also be scrutinised focusing on any references to the Irish language or to any Irish language print.

Individual semi-structured interviews will take place with several stakeholders. As this is a qualitative research only a small sample is required yet it will seek maximum variation when selecting participants. Participants will be purposely sought who have experience of the phenomenon under investigation and can answer the research questions. Therefore, it is proposed to interview a senior manager, six teachers, four parents and two ancillary staff to discover their perception of their role in the promoting of the Irish language and what factors would help and/or hinder such an endeavour.

Students' views will be sought from two focus groups, one from the senior, and one from the junior cohorts of students to obtain their views on a whole school approach. Each group will consist of six student volunteers selected with the aim of reflecting the distribution in the whole school of cultural diversity female/male, year

groups, students who study/don't study the language, higher level/lower level students.

All interviewees will be invited to discuss their experiences of the language and how this impact on their views of the language. Ideas will be elicited on what would encourage/inhibit having a whole school approach to the Irish language in their school. Discussion on what the state could do to improve the situation and on how the state could plan for the future of the Irish language will be sought from all participants.

Regarding the language at school level ideas will be sought on how willing stakeholders will be to participate socially with such an endeavour, how they might plan and prepare for such a project, how they envisage such a process being implemented and what the impacts would be in their view both positive and negative.

Observation of the use of Irish in the school environment, both visually and aurally, including any conversations in relation to the Irish language in English, will be documented. An observational schedule has been designed to assist in observing any references, comments made in speech or in writing outside of the classroom for the duration of this research. Comments or discussions or usage of the language will be documented within the school during normal working hours or at some after-school meeting where parents will be present.

Approximate start date:	**Anticipated end date:**
Collecting data begins March 2015	*Complete data collection* Data analysis May – July 2015 Thesis submission July 2016.

6 Name and contact details of the Principal Investigator (if not you) or supervisor (if a student)	Professor Angela Thody, School of Education, College of Social Sciences. athody@lincoln.ac.uk
7 Names of other researchers or student investigators involved	N/A
8 Location(s) at which this project is to be carried out	Research will be conducted in a coeducational Post-primary school in which the researcher is employed as an Irish language teacher and is also member of middle management and a head teacher for year six. This English-medium school is situated in a primarily English-speaking area of the West of Ireland. The school is situated in a suburb of a small town and is the only post-primary school in the area. The school has currently an enrolment of 648 students. All interviewees will be asked, when accepting an invitation to participating in project, where they would prefer to be interviewed in the school. The student focus groups will be invited to choose one of three areas in the school (a) Library (b) Common Meeting area or (c) the oratory which is at times used for meetings. The intention here is to make participants feel as relaxed as possible during the interview process.
9 Statement of the ethical issues involved and how they are to be addressed, including discussion of the potential risks of harm to both project participants and researchers **This should include:** • **An assessment of the vulnerability of the participants and researchers** • **the manner and extent to which the research might not honour principles of respect, beneficence and justice**	Ensuring research conforms to the strictest ethical principles, rules as set by The British Educational Research Association Guidelines (BERA), the Ethical Principles of the University of Lincoln and the School of Education Research Ethical Guidelines will be adhered to. In Ireland there is currently no single regulatory system or body responsible for research ethics. However, in keeping with current best practice standards of child protection, this research will comply with

• **concerns relating to the relationships of power between the researcher(s) and those participating in or affected by the research**	the requirements of 'Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children' (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011). 'Children First' provides information on protecting and promoting child welfare and the best practice response to personal evidence or reports that children are being harmed or at risk of harm. In accordance with various requirements permission will be sought from parents/guardians and from the school management. Ethical factors that must be considered in research include collecting, storing and maintaining data, anonymity and confidentiality and uses of data (Fraenkel, 1990; Raffe et al, 1989). As the researcher is employed in the organisation being researched the likely effects of my position on respondents and of my insider knowledge and possible bias will also be of significance. *Collecting Data - Risk Assessment* Achieving validity involves reducing the amount of bias (Morgan, 1997). Sources of bias are characteristics of both the interviewer and the respondent (Silverman, 2008), so in this research the researcher must acknowledge his own possible bias. Therefore, points of view the researcher supports must not be featured while contrary opinions from respondents must not be ignored. Some difficulties are envisaged eliciting the participants' views as there is a high level of rapport between most of the participants and the researcher who is a Gaelic teacher in the organisation under study. By ensuring that all participants are aware that the research focus is on their impressions and experiences and not on any personal aspect of their lives, an account of their views in relation to the Gaelic language will be elicited. They will be aware that this research will be of no benefit to me

economically or in terms of promotion in the organisation and therefore should not be a threat. My position in the school can't affect promotion or demotion of respondents. This information, accompanied by the fact that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions, will assist in assuring a truthful response from the interviewees' individual perspectives.

Clear transcriptions soon after each interview will assist in reducing any errors or biasness. All interviewees will receive a copy of their interview transcript where they will have an opportunity to add, amend or delete any aspect of the interview. Further risks are involved in the open-ended design of my research questions which could bring up topics outside the scope of my research. However, prompts and probes will assist to guide the interviewee back to the topic. A clear analysis schedule will be developed after the interviews have concluded, to ensure codes and concepts are created according to what was said, not what the interviewer might like to hear.

Collecting data - Informed Consent

Issues in relation to informed consent are seen to be one of the most critical issues in qualitative research and regarded by some as the 'key issue' in research with humans (Bogdan and Biklen 1982; Evans, 1996). Approval has been sought (and granted) from the case-study school's board of management to do the research in the organisation. (Copy attached). As observational data will inform part of the research, I will inform all in the school community by letter, in the school newsletter and on the school's website the aim of the study and when the observation will be taking place. This will also provide information of what I will be observing i.e. usage of the Irish language (visually or

verbally) and any comments about the Irish language. An observational schedule (See appendix 8) will assist with this and the observation will take place over 9 months of the study.

To ensure good ethical management consent, the consent form (copy attached) students and adults will receive explains:

- The aim and nature of this research, stressing the value of their part in the research which is to create a snapshot of stakeholders' perceptions of the normalisation of the language and of the development of possible theories from this.
- Why interviews are being recorded and/or notes are being taken during the interview.
- How the interviews will be transcribed.
- How the digital and written information will be stored.
- How the information will be disposed of after the project completion.
- How the information will be used (Cohen and Manion, 2007, p. 378).

They will be aware that:

- They may can refuse to have their interview audio recorded.
- They may request to stop the recording of the interviewing at any time (Gilbert, 1993).
- They may withdraw from the project at any time they wish and ask for their interview not to be used. (Oliver, 2003).

Respect for 'vulnerable populations' will be paramount at all times (Creswell, 1994, p. 89). As group interviews will take place with students, permission from parents/guardians of students, and from the students themselves, will have been requested before any interview commences. The school student counsellor and the school chaplain have been informed of the research and are willing to assist any student if they are in

need of their support at any stage of this study.

Research participants will be sought through invitation. Teachers will be invited at a school staff meeting and by individual letter, students will be spoken to at school assemblies and parents will be invited by letter and by using the school newsletter and school website. The students invited to participate in the focus groups will be from the school council who represent the student body. These students have been voted onto the council as their representatives.

Collecting data - Confidentiality and anonymity

Confidentiality and anonymity will be assured to all participants prior to the commencement of interviews. A coding system will be used to protect participants' identities and to facilitate the divorce of transcripts from their original sources as they are collated. This will be a difficult task as the context is a single school in which the researcher is also employed but every attempt will be made to remain aware of this factor. Transcripts will be returned to interviewees for confirmation which is aimed at protecting their interests (Rowling, 1994 cited in Konza (2005, pp. 15-26)). This will give interviewees the opportunity to amend or add to their views and ensures they were happy for the transcript to remain unaltered.

Storing and Maintaining data - Security

On recording interviews on a digital recording device, they will be transferred to two external hard drives which will have a secure pass code, only known to the researcher. Two external devices will be used in the event of one of them malfunctioning. Hard copy transcripts of the interviews will be securely retained in a

	locked filing cabinet at the researcher's home. On completion of the research all the data will be stored securely for five years before deleting and destroying. The research work will be overseen by my University supervisor who will be consulted about all aspects of the project in relation to ethical issues.
10 Does this research involve children and/or young people?	**Yes X** **No ☐** **If yes, please explain (a) how you have obtained or will obtain the appropriate permissions to work with these people (E.g., DBS check in the UK), and (b) your principles for their ethical engagement.** Parents/Guardians' permission will be sought before any student is interviewed. Students will be asked to sign a consent form. The focus groups ensure that the students will be in groups of 6 – 8 during the semi-structured interviews and an atmosphere will be created to assist them to participate freely to the discussion. Copies of interview schedule and consent forms are attached.

Ethical approval from other bodies

11 Does this research require approval from an external body?	**Yes X** **No** **If yes, please state which body:** Approval has been sought and received from the Board of Management of the school.
12 Has ethical approval already been obtained from that body? Please note that such approvals must be obtained before the project begins.	**Yes X (Please append documentary evidence to this form.)** **No ☐ (If no, please explain why below.)** A copy of this letter of approval is attached.

APPLICANT SIGNATURE

I hereby request that the School of Education Research Ethics Committee review this application for the research as described above and reply with a decision about its approval on ethical grounds.

I certify that I have read the University's Ethical Principles for Conducting Research with Humans and Other Animals (which can be found online here: http://visit.lincoln.ac.uk/C11/C8/ResearchEthicsPolicy/Document%20Library/Research%20Ethics%20Policy.pdf).

Mark Flynn 01/12/2014

Applicant signature **Date**

Mark Flynn

Print name

FOR STUDENT APPLICATIONS ONLY

Academic Support for Ethics

Academic support must be sought from your mentor prior to submitting this form to the School of Education Research Ethics Committee.

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught applicants should obtain approval from their tutor or an academic member of staff nominated by the Department.

Postgraduate Research applicants should obtain approval from their Director of Studies.

I (the undersigned) support this application for ethical approval.

A Thody **09 December 2014**

Academic / Director of Studies signature **Date**

A Thody

Print name

For completion by the Chair of the CERD Research Ethics Committee

Please select ONE of A, B, C or D below.

☒ **A. The CERD Research Committee gives ethical approval to this research.**

☐ **B. The CERD Research Committee gives *conditional* ethical approval to this research.**

12 Please state the condition (including the date by which the condition must be satisfied, if applicable).	

☐ **C. The CERD Research Committee cannot give ethical approval to this research but refers the application to the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee for higher level consideration.**

13 Please state the reason.	

☐ **D. The CERD Research Committee cannot give ethical approval to this research and recommends that the research should *not* proceed.**

14 Please state the reason.	

Signature of Chair of CERD Research Committee (or nominee)

Signed

Date 23 March 2015

Appendix B: Information to Parents about the study

[redacted]

2nd September 2017

To: Parents/Guardians.

RE: A research on revitalising the Irish language in schools.
Dear Parent/Guardian,

You may know me as a member of staff (Irish Department) and as the Transition Year coordinator but I am also a student myself, working towards a doctorate at Lincoln University, UK. For this degree I am researching how we might extend the use of Irish in our school, outside of the classroom.
The study seeks to discover students' views on how feasible, useful and popular broadening the use of the Irish language in school may be. Teachers, ancillary staff and parents are also being interviewed.
I have asked your son/daughter if they would be interested in being a part of a group of 6 students who I would interview for 30 - 50 minutes and will be held in a classroom at the school. It will be just a conversation between 6 students and I, as research, asking some questions which will be recorded. All questions are about the Irish language – how much Irish do they have? Where did they learn it? What was their experience of learning it? etc. (The interview will be in English).
Three groups are being interviewed. One group comprising of 6 students from Transition Year, one group from the 1st – 3rd year group and the third group interviewed will be 6 students from 5th – 6th year. The interviews will be held during tutorial time on a Wednesday to be decided. Students will not be withdrawn from any other class. All students are class representatives on the students' council.
All participation is voluntary. Their comments in the discussion will be recorded but their names will be anonymous and will not appear on any publications from this research. I will save the data from the discussion on a password protected computer until the research has been completed. The data will then be erased.
As the students are under 18 years of age consent must be sought from parents/guardians. This is to ensure the research complies with the ethical approvals issued by the University of Lincoln.
Yours sincerely,
Mark Flynn
Mark Flynn

To: Mark Flynn Student's name _____ Class _____

Research on revitalising the Irish language
I allow my son/daughter to take part in a group interview for the purpose of research on the topic of the Irish language. Formal consent forms will be forwarded.

Name:_____ **Date:**_____

Appendix C: Letter of Permission granted by BOM

[redacted]

11-04-2017

Mark Flynn,
Cloghbrack,
Clonbur,
Co. Galway.

Dear Mark,

I refer to your letter of 09/03/17 requesting access to the school population for research purposes.

The Board of Management are delighted to give you this permission and wish you every success with your Doctorate and your Thesis.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Secretary, Board of Management.

[redacted]

Appendix D: Sign informing the school community of the study

"Promoting the use of the Irish language outside of the Irish language classroom in the school environment"

This is the title of a study in the school this year which aims to discover how members of the school community could promote the Irish language in the school .

Therefore;

From September 2017 – May 2018

As a part of the study an observational diary will record any use of or any display of the Irish language in the school.

This study is being done to fulfil the requirements of the University of Lincoln UK, where I am studying for a Ph.D. in education.

All information will be kept in a safe place and will only be used for the purpose of this study.

The name and place of school and stakeholders will not be published.

Míle Buíochas

Mark Flynn.

31st August 2017.

Appendix E: Information Letter to Students.

[redacted]

[redacted]

To: Senior cohort students : A project on revitalising the Irish language in schools.

Date: 27th August 2017

From: Mr Flynn,

You will know me as one of the Irish teachers but I am also a student myself, working for a doctorate at Lincoln University, UK. For this degree I must write a thesis I wish to research the Irish Language and study how we, as an organization, could extend the use of Irish Language in our school outside of the Irish language classroom.

I would like to hear student views on how feasible, useful and popular you think this might, or might not, be. Teachers, parents and ancillary staff are also being interviewed.

Would you be willing to participate in a small group discussion about this topic? The groups will meet at school at a time convenient for the group that will cause minimal disruption to your classes. Each discussion should last about 40- 50 minutes and will be held in one of your classrooms or in the school social area.

All participation is voluntary. Your comments in the discussion will be recorded but your names will be kept anonymous and will not appear on any publications from this research. I will save the data from the discussion on a password protected computer until the completion of the project and then all data will be erased.

If you would like to join in the discussions, please fill in and detach the form below and returned to my office or to my classroom (Room 28).

I will then contact you with further information for both you and for your parents You will be asked to sign an official consent forms. This is to ensure the research complies with the ethical approvals issued by the University of Lincoln. .

Mise le meas,

*Mark Flynn*_____

To Mr. M. Flynn

Research on revitalising the Irish language

I would like to take part in this project and I request the parental consent forms.

Name:_____**Class :**_____

Appendix F: Parental Consent Form

Parental Consent Form of a student to be interviewed

Title of Research Study: Revitalising the Irish language in schools: a case study exploring a counter-ideology in an English-medium Post-primary school.

I have read the attached Letter and understand my child will not be identified and can withdraw at any stage from this research.

I hereby agree, to give consent for my son/daughter to be interviewed in a Focus Group in the above-mentioned study by Mr. Mark Flynn at [redacted]

Signature: _____(Parent/Guardian Signature)

Printed Name:_____

Son/Daughter's Name (Printed): _____

Date : _____

Researcher's signature:_____ Date: _____

Appendix G: Student Consent Form (Senior example)

(At the beginning of the Interview).

TO: Senior Student volunteers

FROM: Mr Mark Flynn

Date:_____

RESEARCH PROJECT ON REVITALISING THE IRISH LANGUAGE IN SCHOOLS

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research.
I am looking forward to hearing your views.

CONSENT FORM

I agree to take part in Mark Flynn's research study, having also received consent from my parent/guardian to do so.

I have read the information about this research. I understand I will not be identified in any documents; I can withdraw at any stage from this research and the group discussions will be recorded.

Signature: _____(Student)

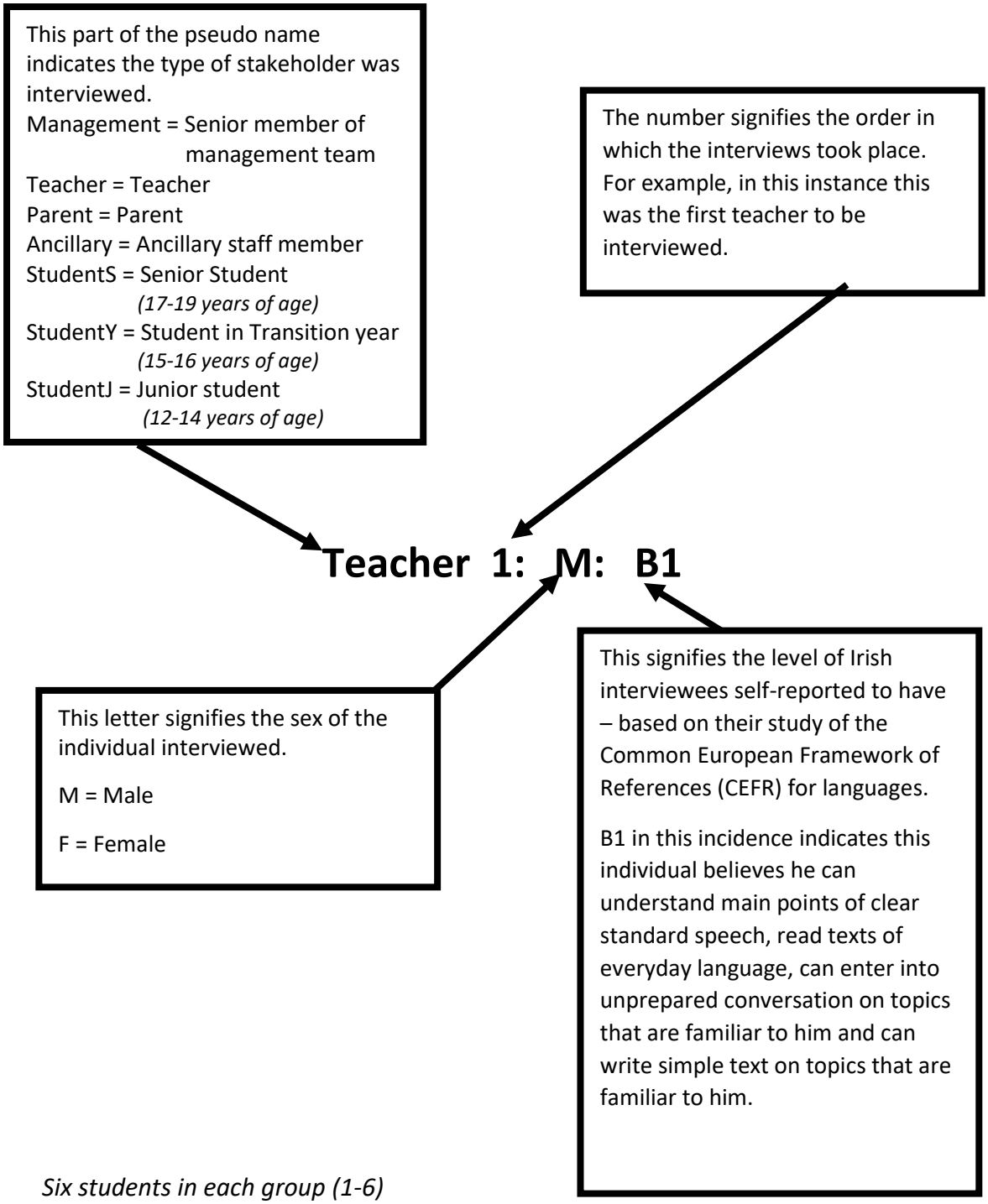
Printed Name:_____

Date : _____

Signature: _____(Researcher's Signature)

Date: _____

Appendix H: Explanation of pseudo names used in report.



Six students in each group (1-6)
Student J1 = A student from the Junior Group (12-15 years of age)
Student Y3= A student from Transition Year (15-16 years of age)
Student S5= A student from the Senior Group (17-19 years of age)
Management 1 = A member of Senior Management in the school
Ancillary 1 = A member of ancillary staff
(Numbers were assigned to those two as it was initially thought there may be a necessity to interview more from those strands which did not occur)

Appendix I: Semi-structured Interview schedule.

Title of Research: Revitalising the Irish language in schools: a case study exploring counter-ideology in an English-medium school.

Name of Researcher: Mark Flynn

THEME 1: PARTICIPANTS EXPERIENCE OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE

What the research would like to know?
An insight is being sought into what are, and what have been participants experiences of the usage of the Irish language in the school, its community and in their everyday lives outside of the school

- How would you describe your level of Irish usage (verbal, aural and reading)?
- *If there is none used:* Have you had any experiences (positive or negative) of learning Irish?

  How often do you feel the need to know/use Irish *(home, school, school community, outside school)*

  What are the factors that hinder you from using Irish?
- *If there is some used:* Where did you learn the Irish you have?
  What were your experiences (*positive or negative)* of learning the language?

  How often do you use Irish and when/where? *(home, school, school community, outside school)*

THEME 2: HOW HAS EXPERIENCES OF THE IRISH LANGAUGE SHAPED LANGUAGE IDENTITY AND IDEOLOGY?

What the researcher would like to know?
Have the experiences of participants with the Irish language have any impact on how they view the language now? What are their impressions, feelings, thoughts on the Irish language today? How do they view the language in relation to their own lives and how do they see it as part of their identity?
PROMPTS

- How have their experiences of the Irish language shaped stakeholders' language [views] identity and ideology?

- How have your experiences with learning the Irish language impacted on how you view the Irish language today?
- How do you view the significance of the Irish language in relation to Irish identity and Irish citizenship?
- Do you believe that the Irish language should be a compulsory subject at school as it is at present ?
- In relation to your own life today how do see the Irish language being a part of it *(home, school, school community, outside school)*?

THEME 3: KEY FACTORS THAT COULD ENCOURAGE OR INHIBIT ESTABLISHING A WHOLE SCHOOL LANGAUGE POLICY FOR BROADENING THE USE OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE

What the research would like to know?
The researcher will collect information on what factors the participant perceives would encourage or inhibit introducing a whole school approach in the school to promoting the language in the school, would the community be receptive to such an endeavour, what planning would be needed for such a project to be successful? What benefits or disadvantages would there be for the school community? What role do participants think the state should have to assist in such a policy? What state policies/legislation are participants aware of in relation to the Irish language? Should more be done by the state?

MACRO ISSUES (national state intervention in policies and planning)

- What is your knowledge of the following initiatives (Top down initiatives)?
- Education Act 1998 (what does it say about the Irish language in schools?)
- The Official Language Act 2013
- The status of Irish in the European Union
- Seachtain na Gaeilge
- Bliain na Gaeilge
- An Fáinne Nua
- An Gaelbhratach
- 'Gaeilge 24'

- In your opinion could the state do more to encourage such a project as broadening the use of the Irish language outside of the classroom? and if so, how? Should/could the existing legislation and policies be extended?

MICRO ISSUES

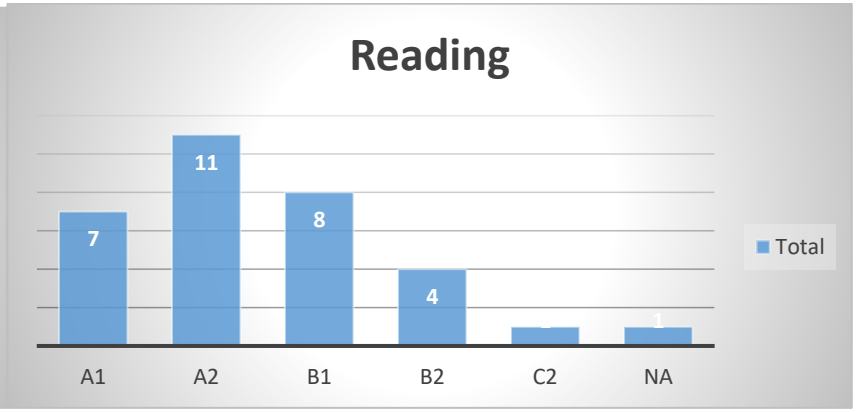
- What might this school do to promote the use of Irish outside of the classroom?
- How receptive do you think staff, students and parents would be to the increased use of the Irish language at this school?
- What planning, preparations and processes would you think are necessary to successfully launch such a policy?
  What benefits or disadvantages do you think there would be of introducing a whole school approach? *(to students, staff, parents, community).*

Appendix J: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages Please place a tick in the box which best describes your own level of Irish: Student/Parent/Teacher/An. Staff/Management (Circle as appropriate)

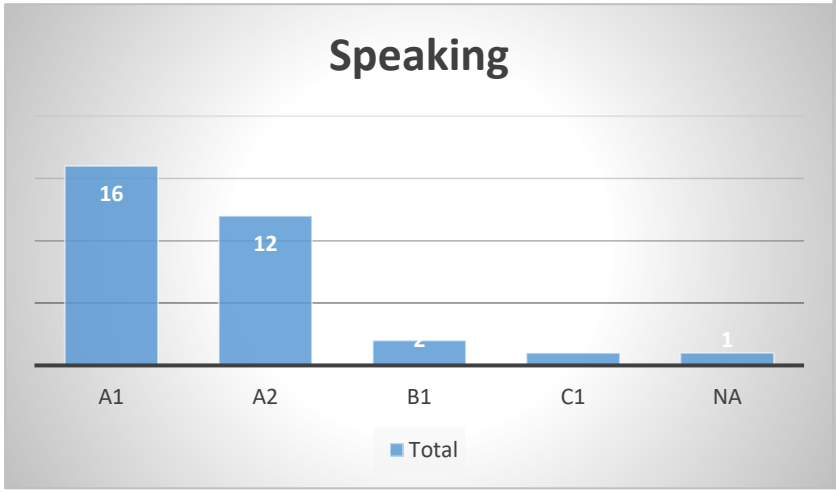
Appendix L

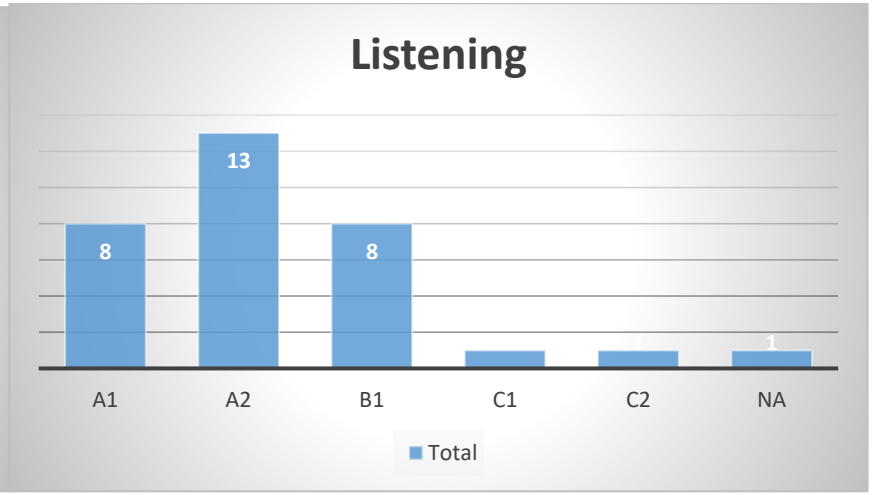
	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
Listening	I can recognise familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.
Reading	I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters.	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency every day or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.	I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialized articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to my field.	I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialized articles and literary works.
Spoken Interaction	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.	I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.
Writing	I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.	I can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate needs. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.	I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.	I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can select style appropriate to the reader in mind.	I can write clear, smoothly flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I c

Appendix K: Self- reported skills in the four linguistic skills

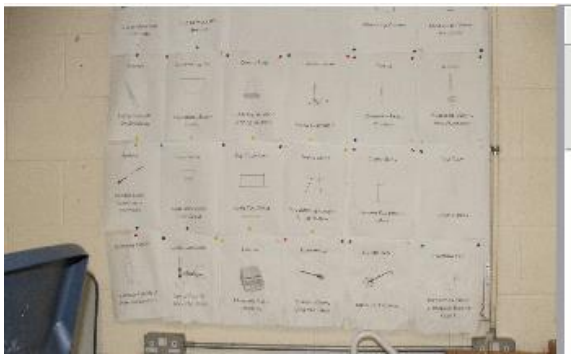


A1 signifying basic Irish in different skills to C2 expressing fluency in the four skills





Appendix L: Examples of photographs indicating language use in the school environments.



	Region	Content
1	470,10 - 2080,1420	Posters on science and equipment in English

	Region	Content
1	980,30 - 1900,980	Important signage in English regarding fire safety (Blanket and extinguisher) Perhaps a missed opportunity to label something in the Irish langauge

	Region	Content
1	40,560 - 460,1170	Irish Department Noticeboard - Poster advertising and event in Irish
2	2170,610 - 2280,1100	Irish Department Noticeboard - Poster in Irish asking people to speak Irish
3	1340,30 - 2180,980	Irish Department Noticeboard - Irish posters wishing students well in their exams, asking them to advertise in Irish here
4	1630,930 - 1950,1420	Irish Department Noticeboard - Texting in Irish abreviations

	Region	Content
1	390,240 - 2230,1310	Professionally designed posters on grammar in Irish in the Irish classroom.
*		

Appendix M: Extracts taken from NVIVO transcripts where participants claimed to need assistance with the Irish langauge.

<Files\\Field Notes - Observations\\Diary 2017-18 of observations> - § 1 reference coded [0.56% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.56% Coverage

- She was enthusiastic to help but when I probed her on a few things I leaned that while she would be enthusiastic she would need a lot of support to keep up the awareness of the language in the classroom.

Would need help

<Files\\Images\\Room 38 Music & Art Room> - § 1 reference coded [33.65% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 33.65% Coverage

Art work on display - a missed opportunity to use Irish perhaps to indicate what is going on.
Diary (24 May 2018) I asked teacher if this would be feasable and she said it was a good idea but that she would have to run everything by an Irish teacher. Would not be right to get it wrong. Never thought of asking them - only would think of that during Seachtain na Gaeilge

Would need help

<Files\\Interviews\\[redacted] 1 reference coded [1.35% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.35% Coverage

Me: and I suppose that is what I was trying to suggest that we tried to create some sort of culture here in the school that would emulate what you are saying. You mentioned staff – how receptive would you think staff would be to this ?

Una: Well I think they would so long as pressure would not be put on people. A few words here or there. we would need to provide a handout or something that would help them to start this

Would need help

Would need help

<Files\\Field Notes - Observations\\Diary 2017-18 of observations> - § 1 reference coded [1.56% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.56% Coverage

[redacted] said that she could not help her daughter with her homework as this was the only subject that she could not do herself while at school. This is a common message I get at parent teacher meetings and when I asked the other Irish teachers they agreed that this is what they also get often. It was felt that this also adds to the difficult students have with the language. Firstly no one to help them at home with the language and secondly the attitude is negative towards the language or perhaps the sense is given that this is a difficult language (16th October 2017).

Appendix N: Extract from Observational Diary were fear, as a means of teaching the langauge, was explained

January 2018

I walked into the kitchen to order food. For the first time ever, after 12 years working with the lady who works in the kitchen, she addressed me in Irish and asked me what I would like. I answered her and she continued speaking Irish to me. I said it was wonderful to hear the language she said that she had loads of the language when she was in school but had lost it and she did not know why she spoke Irish to me at that moment. (My suspicion was that the posters around the school saying that I was doing this project in the school may have had an impact – should have asked her).

She switched to English explaining how fear was part of learning the language. The nuns who taught her would tell them that the Irish inspector was hiding behind the wall as they were walking home from school and they should be speaking Irish on the way home after school. She said she remembered being **afraid** of walking past high walls in case this inspector was hiding there. Cruel way of encouraging Irish being spoken. I informed her that one of the suggestions made to me was if there were to be two queues for food in the school canteen - one in English and one in Irish and this would encourage students and staff to use Irish if they so wished. While she liked the idea she also added that there was awful pressure on them at lunch time to get as many meals out as possible and that the area was so small that it would be difficult and as the other two did not have Irish she was the only one who could talk to them. One other Irish employee there said she had never used Irish and could barely remember it in school. The other employee is Polish and is 12 years in Ireland. (29th January 2018).

Points – Has language, rarely used, supportive of the idea, fears about the practicality of the suggestions of two queues, staff ill-equipped to use Irish, early experiences and fear associated with learning the langauge.

Appendix O: Extracts from December 2017 Observational Diary.

December 2017

It was interesting to note that the conversation was not intended to be a serious conversation but one where they would use their Irish for entertainment reasons. Perhaps, it was an opportunity to use their Irish but it was done so in a manner in which it was amusing to them to be using the language. Even though the topic to be discussed was serious they were laughing. Was it that they had not conversed in Irish before? I will ask them tomorrow why did the care taker use Irish? Why did the teacher treat it as amusing? (7th December 2017)

When I investigated Tuesday the caretaker informed me that he was good at Irish when in school and he loved it. He was an avid GAA player and he thought that Irish should be used more there. He said he loved using Irish when he could. I have known him 23 years and he never spoke Irish to me that I can remember . He said he could not instil that love of Irish in his own family but they do joke about him and how often he uses Irish in the home. When he was fifty they put Breithlá Shona on his cake. He found this funny. His mother spoke Irish but not often but he knew she liked it and used to say that she was good at Irish growing up but that she lost it as the years passed (12th December 2017)

20th February 2018 : Note added two months later - caretaker now, since I asked him about his conversation with a teacher, greets me every time in Irish and when he occasionally has to come into my classroom he will start off by speaking in Irish - an indication that if this initiative was to be forwarded that it would have an effect on many people but of course both must have Irish

The teacher involved said he just enjoys caretakers company and they have many conversations and that he has worked with him for over thirty years and he knows how much he loves Irish and that when he thinks of it he greets him in Irish but that is as far as it goes - he himself felt that he would not have enough Irish to have a meaningful conversation.

…….

- [redacted] came to me with a letter he received that was written to him through the medium of Irish. There is not a word of English he said on it. It was in relation to students who wished to do trade apprenticeships through the medium of Irish. He displayed amazement that there was no English in the letter so he sought my assistance to translate. He expressed dismay that he could not read one word and said that he should be making a better effort to learn the language. My impressions where that his intentions were meaningful but that perhaps he would not do anything about it. (19 Dec 2017)
- The following morning as I was walking down the corridor I met with the principal who greeted me in Irish. I was so surprised I answered in English with a Good Morning phrase. (20 Dec 2017)
- Later that day when I met him again I apologised for not replying to him in Irish to which he said that he was going to make an attempt to speak a few words each day to the Irish teachers to see how his Irish would improve.(20 Dec 2017)
- *(ADDED MAY 2018 - he did not continue with this but did greet me in Irish in the corridor only but not in the staffroom. All dealings with him was in English. I work closely with him on TY issues but this is done in English)*

Appendix P: Extracts from interview and observational data highlighting the obstacle of time in promoting the Irish language

<Files\\Field Notes - Observations\\Diary 2017-18 of observations> - § 4 references coded [4.74% Coverage]
Reference 1 - 0.89% Coverage

It's nice to have some Irish and she is proud of what she has and she wished that she had more so that she could speak to me fluently like I do with others. When I asked her what is stopping her learning more she said it was time and opportunity. She lives in rural Ireland and there are no opportunities to do night classes .
Reference 3 - 1.33% Coverage

On explaining what I was doing in my project to a colleague and asked her what she thought. Her reply was that there is no time for doing all the extra we are expected to do let alone doing more in the Irish language. Anyway I would not have a clue how to be sure that what I would be putting up was any good. Someone would need to be employed full time or at least with a post that would focus on encouraging people to use Irish in the classroom in posters and in talking (12 Jan 2018)
Reference 4 - 0.89% Coverage

Asked maths teacher could it be possible to use some Irish language in perhaps giving words for the different shapes. Did not see this as his job. Said that if there were professional, prepared signage for certain shapes Circle, triangle, square for example but that she would not have the time or the level of Irish needed.

<Files\\Interviews\\[redacted] - § 1 reference coded [0.61% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.61% Coverage

[redacted] It's a work load I suppose in some people's eyes – if you could see it as something that would not take up so much of your time.

<Files\\Interviews\\[redacted]> - § 1 reference coded [0.75% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.75% Coverage

I do find when I have time to read Irish that it comes back to me because I was good at Irish when I was in school. And it does come back to me when I do

<Files\\Interviews\\[redacted]> - § 1 reference coded [0.33% Coverage]
Reference 1 - 0.33% Coverage
Me: Why don't you learn more Irish so ?
[redacted]: Time is a problem

Appendix Q: Extracts from the transcribed data mentioning rote learning.

<Files\\Field Notes - Observations\\Diary 2017-18 of observations> - § 1 reference coded [0.22% Coverage]
Reference 1 - 0.22% Coverage

learning off essays and answers to questions in place of teaching the language.

<Files\\Interviews\\[redacted] § 1 reference coded [0.70% Coverage]
Reference 1 - 0.70% Coverage

[redacted] Verbal would be the best of a bad bunch – I suppose my primary school was all learned off things rote learning I suppose

<Files\\Field Notes - Observations\\Diary 2017-18 of observations> - § 8 references coded [11.62% Coverage]

Reference 2 - 1.99% Coverage
17/ 10 / 2017 .[redacted]a member of staff) on the topic of Irish. She claimed to love Irish and had a lot of Irish but where would she use it. She studied it for one year in College and loved it but after that she only used it a bit when working in Donegal but mostly when helping her students with Homework. She did not like the way Irish was being taught now – **learning off essays** and answers to questions in place of teaching the language. This practice is what seems to get good students high marks and then high points and then places in colleges. It is not learning language in her opinion. They have Irish but not real Irish, they cannot communicate with her, her children she meant, when she tries to speak to them in Irish.

Reference 3 - 1.07% Coverage
He does not understand **why it is taught the way it is –learning off everything but not speaking -** when it is not working and he asked me if I felt the same way? He asked me if I thought they should get of the literature and he said he thought it was so unfair that some people could speak it and it all depended on the school and on good teachers and that there were very little of them around or so he thought … Interesting take on it.

<Files\\Interviews\\[redacted]> - § 3 references coded [7.95% Coverage]

Reference 3 - 4.24% Coverage

Liam: The one thing about learning the language growing up is that we did not speak it enough. We read it and we wrote it and rewrote it and wrote it again and then rote learned it. But we did not speak it. To totally have a language you have to be able to be able to speak it and be totally comfortable with a language you have to speak it. That is the only thing about the approach of the teaching of Irish is we do not speak it enough. And we should be examined more in it. If you want a language to be alive you must be able to speak it. We can read it and write it and not speak it. I would put much more emphasis on the speaking

Appendix R: Extract from minutes of Irish Department meeting March 2018

Cruinniú Múinteoirí Gaeilge

12 Márta 2018 (4:00 – 5:00 i.n) Uaireanta Pháirc an Chrocaigh

I láthair [redacted]

Marcus Ó Floinn

[redacted]

1. Miontuairiscí ón gcruinniú 12 Eanáir 2018
2. Leabhair don bhliain seo chugainn
    a. Níor tháinig mórán samplaí de theasc leabhair nua
        i. Ursula chun glaoch ar na foilsitheoirí le fáil amach an mbeidh rogha againn.
    b. Leabhair don Ardteist mar atá don chéad bhliain eile.
    c. Dréimire agus Staighre le fáil (? Nach bhfuair muid iad I mbliana)
3. An Bhéaltriail
    a. Cé atá ag tabhairt faoin gcúrsa bonn leibhéal
    b. Athraithe ón rang Ard leibhéal go Gnáth leibhéal.
        i. Tuairimí maidir leis an idirbhliain – caithfear rud éigin spraoiúil a dhéanamh leo i mí na Bealtainenadh eachtraíochta (Fiosróidh [redacted]
        ii. Cuireadh a thabhairt do chomhlacht a dhéanann
4. Díospóireachtaí don bhliain seo chugainn
    a. Cé atá sásta grúpa Sóisearach agus grúpa sinsearach a thógáil – Plé ar an obair a bhaineann leo ach an tairbhe a bhaineann leo
    (Marcus sásta foireann amháin a thógáil agus tá Ursula ag smaoineamh ar ach dár ndóigh)

6. An Ghaeilge a spreagadh sa scoil
    a. Luaigh Marcus an Gaelbhratach agus an teoric agus smaointe taobh thiar do.
    b. Cheap [redacted] go mbeadh an t-uafás obair ag baint leis agus go raibh imní ar gach duine an bhliain seo chugainn mar gheall ar an gcúrsa nua.
    c. D'aontaigh [redacted] mar cheap siad go mba cheart é a thriail nuair atá am ag gach duine sa roinn tabhairt faoi.

Text Box added: English translation of no. 6

To promote Irish in the school.

a. Marcus mentioned the project Gaelbratach and the thoughts and theories that support it

b. [redacted]s that there would be too much work associated with it and that everyone was worried about the work of the new course the following year.

c. [redacted] agreed and they thought it should be tried when everyone has the time and people are able to do it right.

Appendix S - Codebook\\Phase 1 - Initial Coding and Noting

Phase 1 - Initial Coding & Noting - 396 initial codes developed in this cycle of coding	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Achievement	1	1
Age at which they are learning	2	4
Ancillary staff views	4	8
Attitudes (Language)	1	1
Attitudes to English Language	7	12
Attitudes to language	5	15
Attitudes to learning Irish	6	10
Attitudes to the Irish language	10	26
Aural Skills	14	17
Awareness of Irish language in the school	3	6
Because of where they came from	1	1
Being part of a group	1	1
Bottom up approach	2	2
Broadening the use of Irish comments	8	26
Can't help with homework	1	1
Coaxing people to speak Irish	1	1
Compulsory Irish	11	16
No	3	4
Should be optional after a 5th class	1	2
Unsure	5	6
Yes	7	9
Dependant on area or region	2	2
different nationalities	1	1
Difficult Language	1	1
disadvantages of broadening the use of Irish	3	6
Do not Did not Prioritize Irish language	3	6
Do not use Irish at all	3	4
Don't want to be seen as different	3	4
Educational initiatives	2	2
English prioritised	3	6
English used but subject specific	14	15
Experiences of learning Irish language	8	20
forced into us	1	1
Negative Experiences	6	6
A chore	1	1
A subject like any other	1	1
Beaten or Drummed into us (Negative)	4	4
Bogged down in the mechanics of the language	1	1
Boring in school	1	1

Phase 1 - Initial Coding & Noting - 396 initial codes developed in this cycle of coding	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
But now can't speak it	1	1
Hated it	1	1
Not taught to be communicative	1	1
Not used outside of Irish class	1	1
Positive experience	5	7
Drummed or Beaten into us (Positive comment)	1	1
Heard Irish outside of Irish class in school	1	1
Impact of teacher	3	4
Intrinsically motivated	1	1
Loved it at school	1	1
family view as important	6	10
Fashionable to speak	1	1
Feelings in relation to inhibition to use language	17	54
Anxiety or Fear or inhibited	14	27
Confidence	10	27
High	1	1
Low	2	4
Medium	1	2
Feelings towards the Irish language	12	30
Anger or Frustration (with Irish)	2	2
Boring	1	2
Cool	1	2
Enjoyment	3	5
Fun	5	8
Must have a grá for it	2	2
Negative	3	4
No person in charge	4	4
Work load	1	2
Passion for Sport not language	1	1
Pride in their country	2	2
Shame but not a disaster	1	2
For Community	1	1
For examination purposes	1	1
For Parent or Family	1	1
For students	3	3
For teacher	3	6
Future of Irish	4	10
Negative attitude	3	4
Positive attitude	1	1
Government Initiatives	7	9
Hearing friends use it	1	1

Phase 1 - Initial Coding & Noting - 396 initial codes developed in this cycle of coding	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Helping with homework	4	5
Helping with the Homework	3	5
Holiday	4	4
How language was acquired	7	15
'bet into us' Made to learn	3	3
By ear (listening to people)	2	3
Opportunity to use your Irish	1	2
Speaking simple Irish with others	1	1
Identifies us as a Nation	1	1
Impact of friends	1	1
Impact of Government Initiatives	3	5
Initiatives not working	1	1
Must come from the people	1	1
Not reaching target audience	2	2
Not serious about Irish	1	1
In the community	1	1
in the community of the participant	7	8
Impact of neighbour	1	1
In the home	7	10
Incentives to learn Irish	14	37
For a career choice	3	3
For fun	2	3
For respect for the Irish speaking community	2	2
Learning for a means to an end only	9	13
Learning Irish for the sake of the community	3	3
Organised event to speak Irish	1	2
The school curriculum was of interest	1	1
To be able to converse with people	3	3
To use abroad	1	1
Inhibiting language learning	18	89
Could not be bothered	8	8
Dying or dead language	4	7
English is everywhere	4	6
Few places you can use it	11	22
Hindering progress of student	1	2
Irish language curriculum	4	6
Lack of time	3	6
Many distractions	1	2
Missed the basics	2	2
Missing an opportunity to learn it	2	3
No contact with Irish speakers	2	2
Not a requirement to use Irish in exams outside of Irish	1	1

Phase 1 - Initial Coding & Noting - 396 initial codes developed in this cycle of coding	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Not good at it so dislike it	2	2
Not practical to learn it	4	4
Of no monetary benefit	1	1
Problems with more powerful cultures	3	3
Modern music styles	1	2
Sports	2	2
View as a subject and not a living language	6	7
Initiative to use Irish	1	2
In staffroom	1	1
Inspired by this interview	3	5
Irish language Syllabus	4	4
Irish language visible in environment	44	55
Irish outside the Irish classroom	7	11
Irish speakers are not recognisable	1	1
Irish usage today	6	7
Knowledge about Government Initiatives	17	80
20 Year strategy for the Irish langauge	15	18
Bliain na Gaeilge 2018	5	5
Brat Glas	2	3
Fáinne Gaeilge	2	2
Gaeilge 24	1	1
Language Act 2003	13	17
TG4	1	2
the requirements of the Education Act (1998) in relation to the Irish langauge	14	18
Knowledge of History of Irish Langauge	5	9
Lack of knowledge	1	1
Lack of knowledge of how to proceed to learn Irish	2	2
Lack of opportunity to use the langauge	4	6
Lack of practice	3	3
Language	6	7
Language acquisition	3	8
Language has been passed down to us	1	1
Language loss	3	3
Reference to emigration	1	1
Language used here would scaffold Irish language teaching	31	33
Learning Difficulties	3	5
Local Café	1	2
Loved learning it in Work place	1	2

Phase 1 - Initial Coding & Noting - 396 initial codes developed in this cycle of coding	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Missed opportunity to use Irish signage	11 10	115
Music	3	3
Must see they are progressing	1	1
Negative attitudes towards Irish	0	0
Have no Irish at all	10	12
Have not thought about the language	2	2
New immigrants	2	2
No Irish used in the environment	49	302
No school culture of promoting Irish langauge	3	3
Not a priority	2	3
Not aware	3	4
Not seen as useful	2	2
Not the language of the home	5	7
Only time a person spoke Irish to me	4	4
Oral Skills	13	41
Overall comment on level of Irish	9	21
Difficult to learn	1	1
Had more Irish but lost it	1	1
Have not been taught how to speak	1	1
Lack of practice	2	2
Missed learning basics	1	1
No Irish	1	1
Not good at languages	1	1
Parental views	9	18
Mixed views	5	6
Negative	2	3
Positive	6	9
Part of our identity, culture or heritage	8	11
Passionate teacher	5	6
Perception of proficiency of Irish	8	11
Perceptions of the Irish language learning	5	41
Ancillary Staff	1	1
Negative Comment	0	0
Positive Comment	1	1
Parents	5	14
Negative Comments	3	4
Positive Comments	1	1
Students	0	0
Teachers	2	26

Phase 1 - Initial Coding & Noting - 396 initial codes developed in this cycle of coding	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Negative comment	2	10
Positive comment	1	5
Place	1	3
Plight of immigrant children	3	3
Politics	2	3
Positive attitudes towards Irish	2	2
Admire speakers of Irish	2	2
All should have some Irish	1	1
Sense of duty to use Irish	1	1
Would not like to see it die	1	1
Pride	3	4
Principal Views	2	5
Rarely use Irish	3	3
Reading	1	18
	1	
Reasons for not using Irish	6	11
Reasons for using Irish	7	10
Reference to Community	5	8
Reference to culture or heritage	1	16
	1	
Reference to educational establishments	2	2
Reference to examinations	1	1
Reference to foreign languages	9	15
Reference to school and the impact of education	0	0
Reference to school planning	2	3
Regret not learning	2	2
Too busy	2	2
Religion	3	3
Religious services	1	1
Religious Services (2)	1	1
Role of Curriculum	6	11
Post primary curriculum	3	3
Primary Curriculum	2	3
Role of Government	7	9
Role of Home	5	10
Role of Management	3	5
Role of Media	1	13
	1	
Role of third level colleges	1	1
Simple phrases	1	1
Sites where language was learnt	1	146
	5	
Community	3	3
Home	9	20
A respect for Irish	1	1

Phase 1 - Initial Coding & Noting - 396 initial codes developed in this cycle of coding	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
No Irish at home	3	4
Reference to Father	4	5
Reference to Mother	4	6
Reference to siblings	2	2
Reference to wife or husband	1	1
There was Irish at home but not spoken	1	1
Post-primary school	13	41
Negative experiences	4	8
Neither negative or positive	5	9
Positive experiences	6	8
Primary School	15	70
Negative experiences	9	18
Fear instilled in them	1	1
Neither positive or negative	2	4
Positive experiences	10	20
Summer Course	3	5
Third Level College	5	7
Negative	2	4
Positive	0	0
Situation of the school	2	2
Slow approach	1	1
So that others would not understand what you were saying	1	2
Some awareness	2	2
Sport	6	6
Staffroom Initiatives to promote langauge	1	1
Strange comments	1	2
Student views	5	9
Negative	0	0
Positive	1	1
Students not taught to communicate in a natural setting	3	3
Subject specific signage	19	20
Teacher views	6	31
Indifferent	1	1
Negative	3	5
Positive	5	10
Teaching of Irish	11	31
The language you get to know a person in	2	2
There is not necessity to have Irish	3	7
No use for Irish	2	3
People don't have Irish	2	4

Phase 1 - Initial Coding & Noting - 396 initial codes developed in this cycle of coding	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Time obstacles	3	4
To help the family	1	1
Tokenism	4	6
Cúpla focal	1	1
Unless they speak it well they wont	2	2
Use Irish in jest	2	3
Use Irish occasionally	3	3
Very proud to have the langauge	3	4
Views on a broader use of Irish in the school	6	7
Views on Irish identity	25	42
Views on the language and citizenship	4	4
Warmth and friendly nature	1	1
Way of thinking	1	1
Ways of promoting Irish langauge	44	196
Allot a time (day or week) for Irish	4	5
A Day a week for Irish	1	1
Seachtain na Gaeilge	3	4
Approach Department of Education & Science	1	1
Bottom up approach	2	2
Encourage or Nudge stakeholders	34	59
Encourage bilingualism	27	31
Role of teachers	12	22
All teachers use simple phrases with students	3	5
Make the teaching of it FUN	4	4
quality of teaching or teachers	3	4
Teaching communicative langauge	6	9
Subtle Approach	6	6
Focus on benefits	1	1
Financial Benefits	1	1
Focus on Cultural aspects	1	1
Have a policy	18	41
Establishing a policy	12	13
Form a committee	3	7
Get people involved	1	1
Needs a big focus on it	1	1
Planning an intervention	3	6
Promoting langauge among ancillary staff	2	2
Study one subject through the medium of Irish	1	1
Views on integrating into Department policies	4	6

Phase 1 - Initial Coding & Noting - 396 initial codes developed in this cycle of coding	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Whole school approach	3	4
Informal approach	5	8
Through songs and music	2	2
Through sports	4	4
Keep a diary	1	1
Negative approaches	5	7
Fears	4	6
Expensive to promote	1	1
Funding required	1	1
Outside of school interventions	4	12
Employ someone to promote	1	2
Exposing students to Gaeltacht life	1	7
Famous People	2	2
More Local & National airtime	1	1
Provide support to learners	10	24
Have sentence and word of the week for all	1	1
Highlight why it is important	1	1
Irish Signage	6	14
Colour or Different Font signage for Irish	1	2
Irish speaking buddy system	2	4
Provide helpful literature fliers etc	1	1
Supportive measures required	1	1
Weekly bulletins teaching Irish for the home and school	1	2
Rewards for using Irish	5	6
Bonus points at LC	1	1
Bonus Points at school	1	1
Irish queue in Canteen	3	3
Rewards	1	1
Syllabus	1	1
The use of IT & Social Media	6	10
Encourage the use of Irish in Social media	4	5
Screen savers with Irish messages	1	1
Use of modern technologies	2	4
Through teamwork	0	0
Involve a committees or groups	6	8
Irish club	5	6
Parents Council	1	1
Student council involvement	1	1
Top down approach	1	1
Transition Year or gaisce project	1	1
Unsure	2	2
Use of intercom to make Irish announcements	2	2
What the Irish language means to them	7	21

Phase 1 - Initial Coding & Noting - 396 initial codes developed in this cycle of coding	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
For educational reasons	3	3
Must be something out of it	3	3
Nice to have it but not useful even in Ireland	1	2
Should have it as part of Irish identity	3	4
Where Irish language is used	19	80
College friends	1	2
Community	7	8
Home	12	16
In school	21	22
As a result of this research	1	2
I was good at it at school	2	3
Infrequently	2	2
Instructions to students on the corridor	1	1
Jovial exchange	1	2
Only in Class	2	2
Reference to extra-curricular activities	1	1
Role in organisation	1	3
Living or on holidays abroad	11	14
Comments about being abroad	2	3
No where	2	2
Through sport	2	3
When you know that the other person likes Irish	1	1
Work	5	7
Why Irish is important or less important	5	6
Cultural reasons	1	1
Diaspora	1	1
Language loss and what goes with it	1	1
willing to learn	3	3
Words not sentences	3	7
Would become the norm	1	1
Would need help from Irish teachers	2	2
Would you send your child to a Gaelscoil	1	2
Consider it strongly	1	1
Writing	5	7

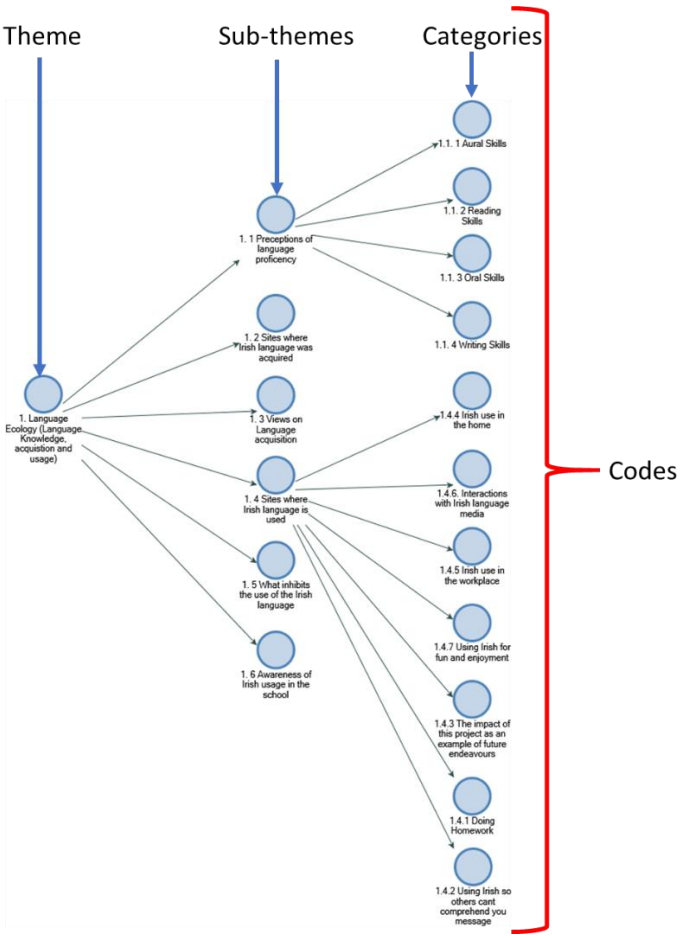
Appendix T- Codebook\\Phase 2 – Developing Subordinate Themes

Phase 2 – Developing Subordinate Themes - 396 initial codes mapped and collapsed to 17 subordinate themes	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Attitudes (Language)	27	305
Broadening the use of Irish comments	47	264
Experiences of learning Irish langauge	9	26
Incentives for using Irish	4	6
Inhibiting language use	21	87
Irish usage today	19	46
Knowledge of Government initiatives	17	86
Language acquisition	3	8
Miscellaneous	21	60
Perception of proficiency of Irish	19	115
Reasons for not using Irish	10	35
Reasons for using Irish	7	10
Reference to school and the impact of education	359	588
Role of Home	5	10
Role of third level colleges	1	1
Views on identity	25	41
Where Irish language is used	17	58

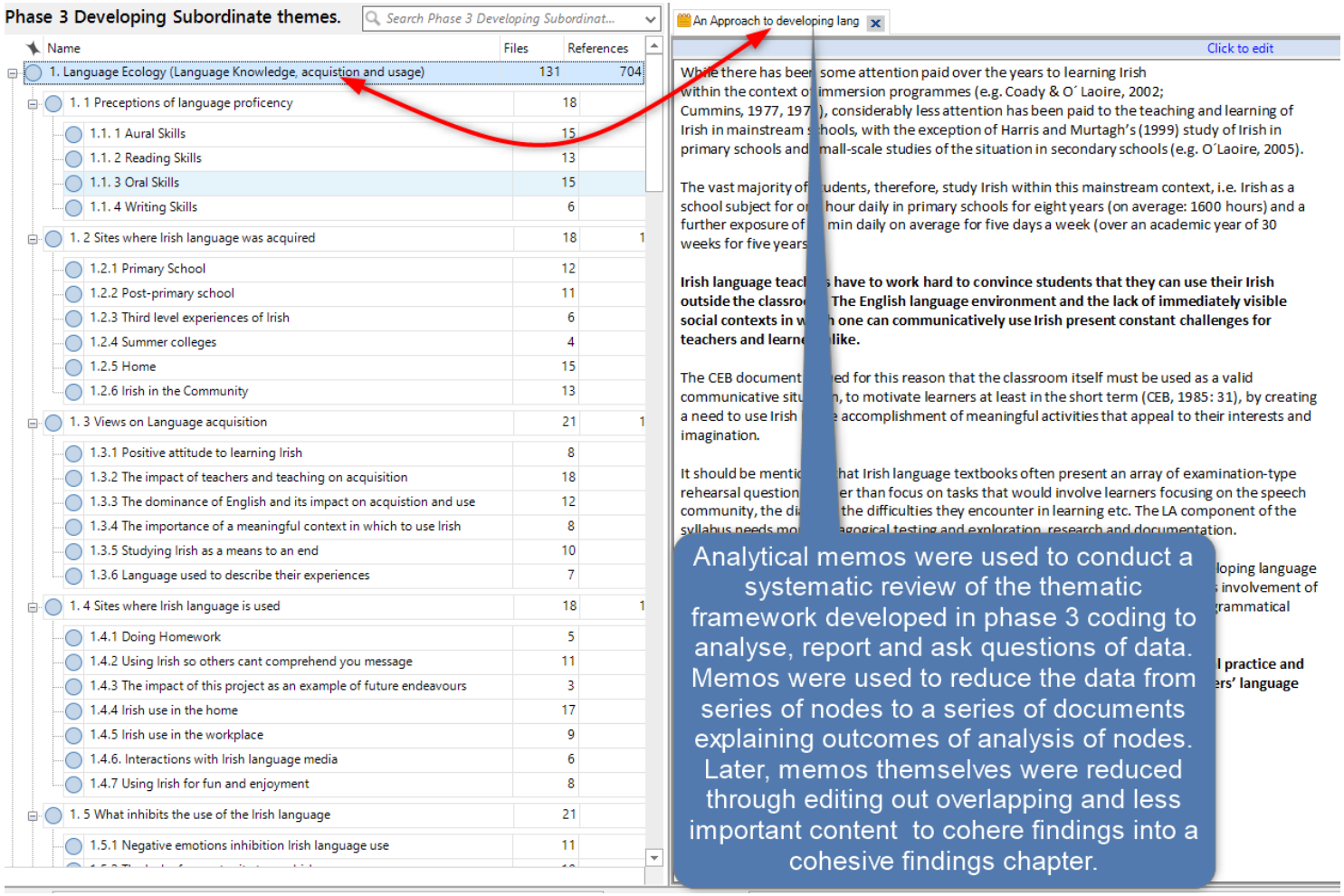
Appendix U- Codebook\\Phase 3 – Developing Superordinate Themes

Phase 3 - Developing Superordinate Themes - conceptually mapping 14 subordinate themes to 3 superordinate themes with sub-themes	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
1. Language Ecology (Language Knowledge, acquisition and usage)	131	704
1. 1 Perceptions of language proficiency (Standard of Irish)	18	97
1. 2 Sites where Irish language was acquired (Experiences of language learning)	18	121
1. 3 Views on Language acquisition (Positive and negative experiences of learning Irish)	21	154
1. 4 Sites where Irish language is used (Where the langauge is used in their lives)	18	114
1. 5 What inhibits the use of the Irish language	21	95
1. 6 Awareness of Irish usage in the school	113	123
2. Language attitudes and beliefs	166	921
2. 1 How languages are viewed in the organisation	45	142
2. 2 Attitude to the Irish language	48	201
2. 3 Attitude to learning Irish	37	253
2. 4 Incentives to learn Irish	16	56
2.5 Factors inhibiting Irish language learning	132	151
2.6 Views on compulsory Irish in schools	15	83
2.7 Tokenism and the 'cúpla focal' ideology	13	35
3. Language management	21	371
3.1 Government initiatives - knowledge and implementation	18	102
3.2 Governmental initiatives that were perceived would be beneficial	16	55
3.3 Bottom up initiatives that could assist	20	162
3.4 Perceived advantages	10	22
3.5 Perceived disadvantages of the intervention	14	30

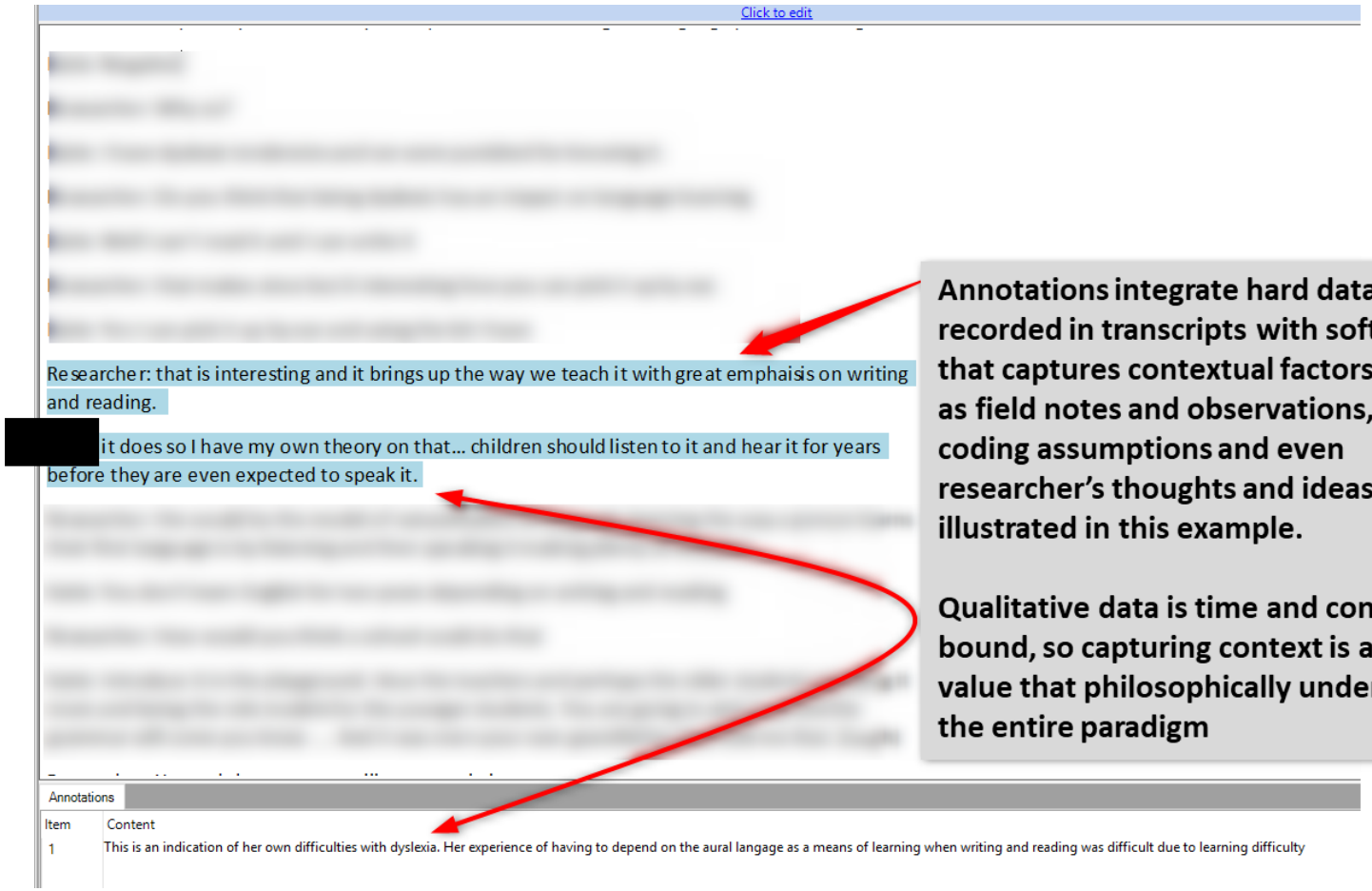
Appendix V - Example of flow from codes to categories to themes



Appendix W - Example of the role Analytical Memo



Appendix X - Example of the role of Integrated Annotations



Annotations integrate hard data recorded in transcripts with soft data that captures contextual factors such as field notes and observations, coding assumptions and even researcher's thoughts and ideas as illustrated in this example.

Qualitative data is time and context bound, so capturing context is a core value that philosophically underpins the entire paradigm